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AP PHOTO



Chinese and Russian military forces are engaged in joint exercises in northwestern China as ties grow between the two states amid uncertainty over instability in Afghanistan. The exercises involving ground troops and air forces are due to continue through Friday in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous region.

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AP PHOTO



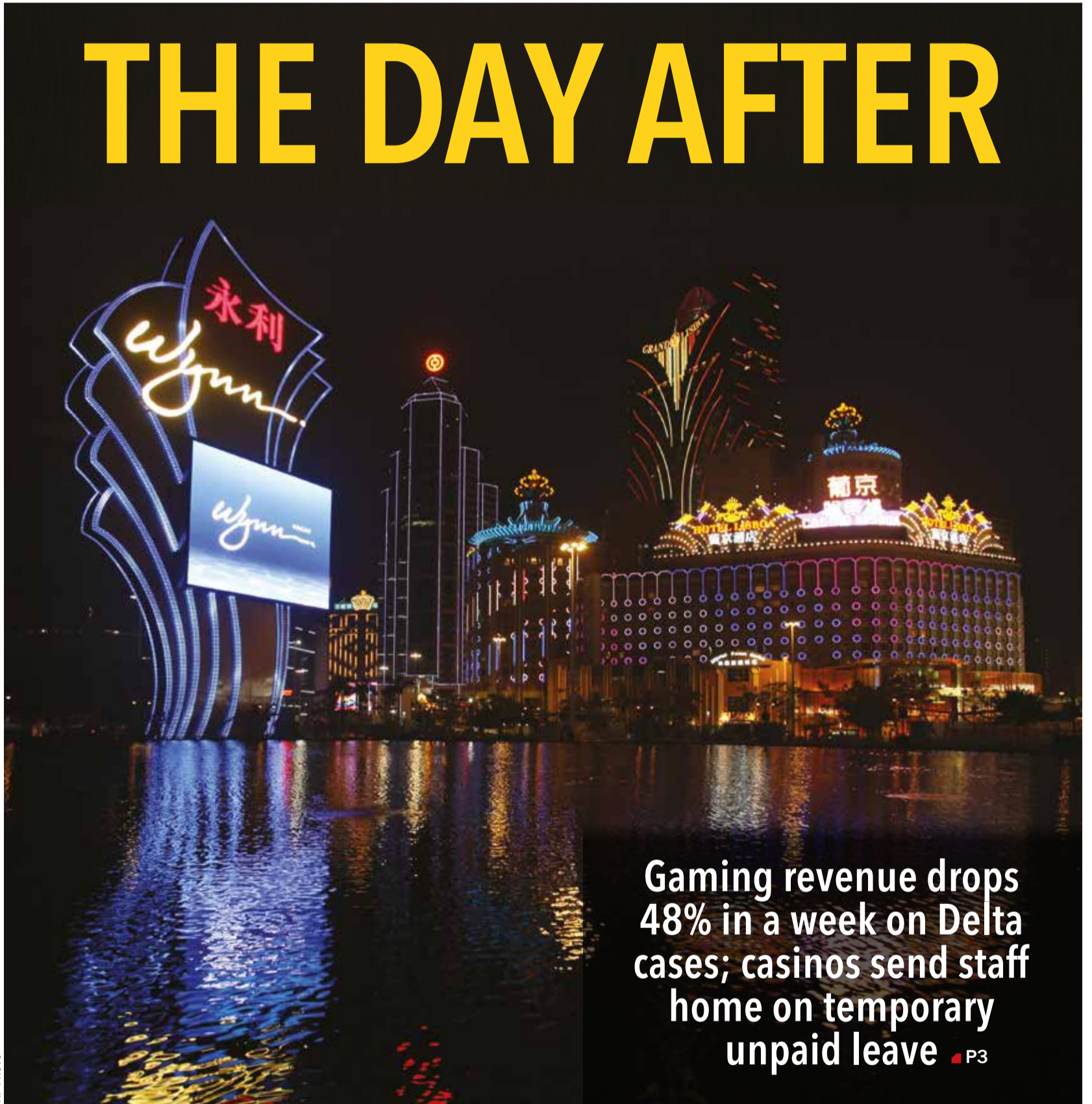
India's government is repealing a controversial tax law under which it pursued billions of dollars from international companies for their past dealings and hopes that scrapping the retrospective levy boosts investor confidence. The bill approved in Parliament's upper house Monday proposes to withdraw tax demands made over indirect transfers of Indian assets prior to May 2012. It requires companies end their legal challenges over the old law and would refund the principal amount of any of the retrospective taxes the companies paid.

AP PHOTO



Afghanistan A U.S. peace envoy brought a warning to the Taliban yesterday that any government that comes to power through force in Afghanistan won't be recognized internationally after a series of cities fell to the insurgent group in stunningly quick succession. Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy, traveled to Doha, Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, to tell the group that there was no point in pursuing victory on the battlefield because a military takeover of Kabul would guarantee they will be global pariahs.

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DSF EDUCATES SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT TAXATION

The Financial Services Bureau (DSF) has educated school students from approximately a dozen primary and secondary schools about the duty of taxation in the first half of this year. Primary school students were shown animated videos to educate them about the idea of tax declaration as a duty. In secondary schools, the DSF taught classes on professional tax, revenue tax, and revenue supplementary tax. The Campus Promotion Campaign on Taxation has been in operation since 2015 and is popular across the education sector.

HOUSING BUREAU ISSUES 221 MANAGEMENT LICENSES

As of August 6, the Housing Bureau (IH) has issued a total of 221 management licenses for the provision of services at floor buildings, in addition to 191 provisional licenses. Some 41 provisional license holders have not applied for the formal license. Of these, 31 are not currently under a service contract with any building. The IH is in contact with the remaining 10 to remind them of the application requirements. They will not be permitted to provide property management services after August 21 unless they obtain a license, and will be fined between MOP50,000 and MOP500,000 if they provide services without a formal license.

GOV'T OFFERS FREE COVID-19 TESTS TO SMOKE OUT HIDDEN CASES

HONEY TSANG

PEOPL E can now enjoy free nucleic acid test (NAT) services offered by the government as of yesterday, Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, who announced the new policy at the regular Covid-19 media briefing yesterday.

Tai emphasized that the complimentary service is intended to help those who believe they have been exposed to Covid-19 to take the NAT for early identification.

To prevent abuse of the service, the NAT results obtained from this mechanism will not be uploaded to the health code system, and cannot be used for the purposes of facilitating border crossing, he added.

If an individual does not receive a phone call from the government within six to eight hours of conducting the free NAT, this is likely to mean they tested negative.

MORE VACCINES TO ARRIVE IN MACAU

In further good news for the public, a new batch of 200,000 Sinopharm inactivated vaccines was dispatched from Beijing yesterday morning. It is slated to arrive in Macau tomorrow. This means that Macau has now a sufficient supply of vaccines for the public, Tai reaffirmed.

Since the inoculation service resumed on August 8, following the three-day mass test conducted last week, Macau is now seeing around 5,000 people receiving a vaccination every day. However, the current daily rate is still "lower than expected."

Tai urges the public to get vaccinated and help foster herd immunity within the community as



soon as possible. He is aiming for an 80% vaccination rate in Macau, but added that this is not an easy task. Most vaccines in history have not achieved an 80% inoculation rate among the population.

Nonetheless, he stressed that this is a common goal that the entire world is working towards, as it is one of the ways that society will be able to resume normality.

"For sure, the higher the inoculation rate, the more robust the herd immunity will be," Tai explained, suggesting that 80% is not necessarily the ultimate goal.

MASS TEST FOLLOW-UP

The government has been unable to reach around 2,000 people who have not conducted the NAT, even following the conclusion of the mass test.

The authorities are now investigating the whereabouts of these people, speculating that some may hold dual nationalities and have already left Macau.

Among the 55 people who refused to take the test, 16 conducted the NAT on their own, whilst 39 have not taken the test as required.

Of these 39 people, the police

force have identified 35 of them and are trying to contact four others. So far, there is only one person who remains reluctant to conduct the NAT, and has agreed to undergo a 14-day quarantine as an alternative to testing.

Tai said the government has no right to force any person to conduct the NAT.

Regarding the family of four who were infected with the Delta variant, all of them are in good health. The daughter and son have begun to regain their sense of smell, and the father's fever is gone.

GOV'T REINSTATES 48-HOUR COVID-19 TEST FOR CROSS-BORDER TRAVELERS

THE government has relaxed the cross-border measures between Macau and Guangdong Province by increasing the validity period for negative Covid-19 test results back to 48 hours.

Coming into effect from 6 a.m. yesterday, the measure was announced by the government late on the night of August 9, after all samples tested negative during the citywide mass test.

The relaxation in cross-border measures offers great relief for bluecard holders residing in Guangdong, as it enables them to enter and leave Macau more readily.

In yesterday's media briefing, Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said that the government decided to reinstate the regulation after a discussion with mainland governments.

All parties agreed to provide more leeway for the cross-border regime, taking into consideration the fact that there have no further confirmed cases discovered from the mass test over the past seven days, aside from the family of four in Macau.

The less restrictive measures are intended to offer greater convenience to daily cross-border commuters.

CITY'S 'IMMEDIATE PREVENTION STATUS' LIFTED

THE city's "immediate prevention status," which had been placed last Tuesday following the announcement that a family of four locals tested positive, was lifted at 10 p.m. last night.

The order was signed by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

During the Covid-19 press briefing yesterday, it was disclosed that the status will be lowered in accordance with the pan-

demic risk.

All sample results received from the three-day mass testing have come back negative. The city's first-of-its-kind mass Covid-19 test scheme processed 614,465

people, together with another 101,786 people who underwent the test on their own outside the citywide testing program since August 3 — totaling 716,251 people. Last Tuesday, the gover-

ment proclaimed that Macau was facing an "extremely high" contagion risk within the local community.

To prevent the spread of the pandemic in Macau, a set of mandates has been enforced, including the requirement of all people leaving Macau to present

a negative Covid-19 testing proof conducted within 24 hours and classifying the residential building the family inhabited in as "red-code zone," in which all the inhabitants there are not allowed to leave the area until they test negative for Covid-19 and further notice. **MDT**

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GAMING

Casinos' daily revenue drops 48% in a week following Delta cases

RENATO MARQUES

CASINO revenues in the first week of August have reverted to the levels of September last year, investment research and institutional asset management company, Sanford C Bernstein Ltd reported.

According to the brokerage firm, the average daily gross gaming revenue (GGR) dropped as much as 48% for the first week of August when compared with the previous week. The weekly total of 125 million patacas is "the lowest daily GGR since late September [last year]," the firm stated.

The sharp drop was attributed to recent travel disruptions between Macau and the mainland after four Delta variant Covid-19 cases in a family of local residents was detected on August 3. The affected individuals had been in contact with the community, triggering fears of a potential outbreak.

In response to the discovery,



cross-border travel became highly restricted, with those traveling between the neighboring city

of Zhuhai and Macau required to present a negative Nucleic Acid Test result issued within 12 hours.

Although the casino operations were never at risk, having been cleared by the Chief Execu-

tive (CE), Ho Iat Seng at a special government press conference on August 4, the health authorities decided to conduct mass testing across the whole population in Macau to ensure that there were no hidden cases, a fact that also disrupted economic activity within the region.

By executive order of the CE, several types of establishments, including karaoke venues, saunas, and bars were also forced to close their doors, which scared away a large number of casino patrons.

Nevertheless, Sanford C Bernstein also noted in the same report that since the mass testing delivered a negative result, the "situation in Macau appears to be under control." It is expected that both border restrictions and, consequently, casino operations will soon resume to previous levels.

Still, the report notes that it is expected that August results will show a 30% drop when compared to July and a 70% drop when compared year-on-year with 2019.

According to official data, July 2021 was the second-best month since the start of the pandemic, only surpassed by May this year, when GGR reached 10.4 billion patacas.

Also contributing to a future positive outlook was the lifting of the city's "immediate prevention status" last night.

Unpaid leave at casinos is only 'temporary', says Cloee Chao

HONEY TSANG

THE city's casino operators have not put into action another wave of unpaid leave, even after the emergence of the four confirmed Delta cases in Macau, Cloee Chao, president of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association, told the Times yesterday.

Though some casinos enforced unpaid leave for employees who were unable to enter Macau due to the previously-shortened validity period for Covid-19 test results as well as those quarantined in the red-code zone, she acknowledged that this was just an "interim approach."

Some considerate operators even offered half-paid leave for affected staff during this period, she told the Times.

Chao called on casino

operators to pay their affected staff in full, especially those required to quarantine in red zones. Such workers are forced to observe medical observation for 14 days, and having no income during this time may undermine their financial situation.

Soon after the Delta cases were reported, the governments of both Macau and Zhuhai shortened the validity period for certified Covid-19 negative test results to 12 hours for all people traversing the Macau-Zhuhai border. The strict measure came into force at 6 a.m. on August 4 and made daily cross-border travel almost impossible.

Given the reduced number of workers, the city's casino only managed to operate around one-third of gaming tables over the past few days compared to

the days prior to the enactment of stricter measures.

"Casino staff numbers, and also the number of patrons, have displayed a sharp plunge at casinos. It is as if the situation [visitation] has returned to the period right after the first lockdown last year," she added.

Due to these new cases, travelers are now less inclined to travel to Macau.

The sharp reduction in visitor numbers has dealt a blow to the gaming business over the past few days.

When asked about the gaming industry's prospects, Chao said that given the fickle nature of the Delta variant, she is not certain if the gaming business can rebound quickly next week, although next week will mark 14 days since the four confirmed cases were reported.

POPULATION FIGURES REMAIN STABLE, TNRS CONTINUE TO DROP

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL population figures remained stable during the second quarter (Q2) of this year, official statistics released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) show. At the same time, the number of non-resident workers (TNRs) has continued to decline, currently registering at 172,261, down by 852 when compared with the previous quarter.

The total Macau population recorded at the end of June was 682,500.

According to the same release, the birthrate has increased quarter-to-quarter by 126 to a total of 1,299 births in Q2.

Nevertheless, this slight growth in Q2 does not make up for the significant drop registered in the first quarter; the figures for the first half of this year (H1) recorded a total of 2,472 births, representing a drop of 320 when compared with the same period last year.



The mortality rate also dropped during Q2 when compared quarter-to-quarter, as there were fewer deaths (35), amounting to a total of 554 in Q2.

Still, mortality figures for H1 showed an increase in deaths when compared year-on-year with 2020, when the number of deaths dropped by 56.

During the first six months of 2021, 1,143 people passed away, with the two primary causes of death being tumors and diseases related to the circulatory system.

RESIDENCE GRANTING IN FREE-FALLING

According to the same release, the number of people acquiring residency status in Macau dropping significantly during the first half of this year.

When compared to the same period last year, 144 fewer people were granted residency, representing a drop of 60%.

This means that during H1 of 2021, only 97 residency permits were approved, in contrast to the 241 granted in the same period last year.

HAIRSTYLISTS CALL FOR ACCREDITATION SYSTEM TO ENSURE FAIR COMPETITION

HONEY TSANG

THE Hairstyling Industry Certification Committee is calling for the government to establish a standardized accreditation mechanism for local hairstylists to ensure fair competition and upward mobility within the industry.

According to a recent survey conducted by the committee — polling 254 local hairstylists and salon operators — almost 80% of respondents claimed that there was an insufficient number of skilled practitioners within the industry, and a lack of local talent.

Adding to their burden is the growing trend for rapid-cut and hair-extensions over these years, which employ predominantly foreign workers and force local hairstylists out of the job market. Over 80% surveyed said this is the key reason behind the cut-throat competition within the sector.

At present, Macau has almost 500 hair parlors, with a total of 1,200 practitioners. The parlors dedicated to offering rapid-cut hair-growth services accounted for one quarter of them.

The committee opined that



XINHUA

local youths have lost faith in the prospect of a hairstyling career, considering that Macau lacks an accreditation system for the industry's professionals. Hence, they are reluctant to take on hairstyling jobs.

The lack of an accreditation system is also the reason behind the industry primarily employing foreign workers. The director urges the government to create an accreditation system as soon as possible.

To further ensure fair competition and development of the industry, the committee also suggests the government

lay down regulations to ensure a balanced ratio of local and foreign staff hired at each salon and to ban foreign workers from being hired as assistants or taking on the work of hairstylists.

The committee also calls on the government to offer support to organize more training courses to enhance upward mobility within the profession.

The committee released the survey results yesterday at a media briefing, which gave an overview of the operational hardship faced by the city's traditional hairstylists.



RENATO MARQUES

NEW LOANS ON THE RISE, UNPAID ONES ALSO GROWING

RENATO MARQUES

NEW approvals of both residential mortgage loans (RMLs) and commercial real estate loans (CRELs) have registered growth in June this year, statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) revealed.

The same communication also shows that the outstanding balances of both RMLs and CRELs also recorded an increase in June.

In June, new RMLs approved by local banks increased 26.8% month-to-month when compared with May to MOP3.85 billion.

Concurrently, the monthly average of new RMLs approved between April and June was MOP3.1 billion, up by 10.7% from the previous period (March to May).

The RMLs approved to residents (MOP3.64 billion) represented 94.4% of the total, a figure that also registered a growth of 21.3%, while those for non-residents stood at MOP216.9 million.

New CRELs registered an ex-

ponential growth of 119.1% month-to-month to MOP7.91 billion. The monthly average of new CRELs approved between April and June was MOP5.6 billion, up by 55% when compared with the previous period (March to May).

At the end of June this year, the outstanding value of RMLs was MOP236.8 billion, a sum that represents a growth of 0.7% month-to-month to May this year, and 1.9% when compared year-on-year with June 2020.

In this particular category, the outstanding balance component of loans to non-residents has recorded a higher growth percentage (1.6%) while those to residents grew by just 0.7%.

The outstanding value of CRELs was MOP161.3 billion, representing a 1.2% rise from the previous month, a significant drop of 10.3% year-on-year.

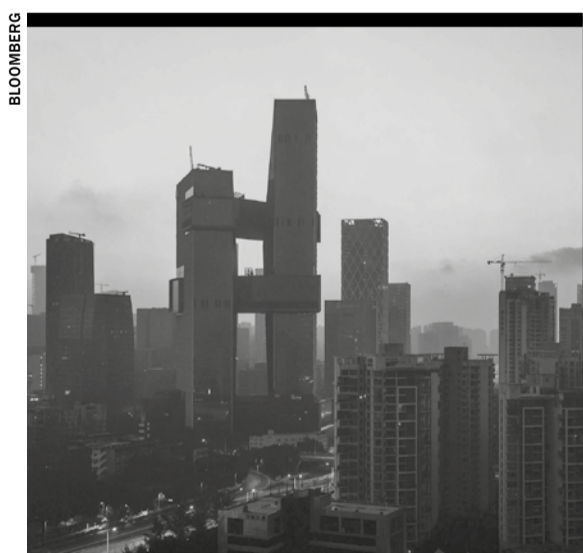
In the commercial sector, the trend was inverted, with the outstanding balances growing more (1.3%) to residents, while the loans non-residents fell by 0.6%.

14TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Guangdong wants companies to reach RMB800 billion income by 2025

GUANGDONG Province will further support the Shenzhen Stock Exchange in a bid to establish a bond platform in the Greater Bay Area to attract qualified Hong Kong and Macau financial institutions and non-financial companies to issue bonds. This goal was stated in Guangdong's "14th Five-Year Plan for Financial Reform and Development of Guangdong Province."

Financial exchanges and capital market connectivity in the Greater Bay Area will be strengthened to improve the interconnection of financial markets through programs such as "Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect" and "Bond Connect," as ci-



BLOOMBERG

ted in a report issued by Newsgd.com.

Guangdong Province aims to expand its companies at home and abroad to over 1,500 with premium income to surge by about RMB800 billion by 2025, adding that financial in-

dustries in Guangdong will become an important pillar of this plan, further strengthening the ability to allocate resources.

According to the report, the balance of domestic and foreign currency deposits in

the province will reach RMB40 trillion. The balance of loans will reach RMB30 trillion. The overall aim is for high-quality financial development to be at the forefront of the country.

The province aims establish the Guangzhou Futures Exchange and develop a complete, high quality futures industry chain to attract global investors and enterprises. Guangzhou will also support Shenzhen in building a global financial innovation center.

The city intends to be a leader in the application of digital RMB, thereby accelerating the cultivation of leading financial and technology institutions and industry chains. LV

ROMANCE SCAM

LOCAL WOMAN LOSES RMB500,000 OVER PARCEL FROM ONLINE LOVER

RENATO MARQUES

A 50-year-old woman, resident of Macau, has reportedly lost RMB500,000 in a scam involving an alleged virtual lover, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported.

According to the report, the woman met a man through a social media platform and maintained contact with him over a period of some time.

The man, claiming to be in a country where a war broke out, requested the woman's address to allegedly send her a parcel containing his valuables, including cash and jewelry.

After a few days, the woman received a call from an alleged customs official in the mainland who said they had a parcel with her name. This person told the woman that since the parcel contained numerous valuable items and foreign currency, she would have to pay taxes related to such

items to clear the parcel from customs.

Believing the alleged customs official, she followed the instructions to transfer a total of RMB500,000 across 10 transactions into 10 different accounts located in the mainland.

She then waited to receive the alleged parcel.

The case was finally discovered when the woman's daughter found out that she had made multiple transfers of a high amount of money.

She then recommended the woman file a complaint with the PJ about the scam.

The PJ also revealed three similar cases during the press conference Monday, in which three local women aged between 20 and 50 years old reportedly lost over 1 million patacas in total, by sending money to alleged boyfriends that they had met on social media platforms.

Lawmaker Coutinho calls for extra financial subsidy

LAWMAKER Pereira Coutinho wrote an enquiry to the Chief Executive (CE) calling for another round of consumer subsidies to "safeguard quality of life and employment."

This will be his last written enquiry to the government head in this legislative term.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng was set to have a question and answer session yesterday at parliament, but due to rising concerns surrounding Covid-19, the session was cancelled.

The city's public Conde de São Januário Hospital took in four new patients with the virus earlier this month.

As a substitute for the session, lawmakers were asked to send in written questions.

Coutinho asked the government head if he had plans to release another round of the consumption card allowance, which previously granted a total of MO8,000 to each eligible resident. In addition, he asked if Ho will extend the repayment period for commercial loans



borrowed by local businesses.

In his written question, the lawmaker stated that the new cases recorded during the golden period of the summer holiday will further impact the city's economic recovery.

He claimed that certain residents in the cordoned buildings work in the gambling industry, and have taken unpaid

leave during the course of the pandemic.

"Now, with epidemic control measures in place, they can't go to work. They were requested by their employers to take unpaid leave," the lawmaker noted. "They are incapable of repaying their mortgages, and some of them are not even able to meet their

daily expenditures."

Moreover, he pointed out that "these new cases have weakened confidence to travel, for both residents and tourists."

The epidemic control measures have also hindered the operations of businesses around the control zones, he added. **AL**

ELECTIONS 2021 CE ANNOUNCES AIR TIME DESIGNATION FOR ELECTION CANDIDATES

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has announced the airtime designations on the public broadcasters for election candidates to campaign for the upcoming Legislative Assembly election, the Official Gazette has announced.

Each candidate list will have airtime on TDM, the television broadcast, and Radio Macau. Broadcasts will be made in both official languages, namely Chinese and Portuguese.

There are 14 lists in the direct election and five in the indirect constituency.

The upcoming Legislative Assembly election will be held on September 12, 2021.

As stated in the Official Gazette, each list may air their broadcasts 21 and 16 times on the Chinese and Portuguese channels of the TDM respectively. Except for the last broadcast that will last for one minute, the other broadcasts will be a minute and a half in duration.

On Radio Macau, each candidate list will be given 33 and 21 broadcasts on the Chinese and the Portuguese channels respectively, with 1 minute of airtime.

The last broadcast should take place no later than September 10, regardless of the platform or channel. **AL**

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CHINESE, RUSSIAN MILITARIES HOLD DRILLS IN NORTHWEST CHINA

CHINESE and Russian military forces are engaged in joint exercises in northwestern China as ties grow between the two autocratic states amid uncertainty over instability in Afghanistan.

The exercises involving ground troops and air forces are due to continue through Friday in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous region.

The region borders on Xinjiang, where China has detained more than 1 million Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities in what it calls a campaign against terrorism and extremism.

Xinjiang shares a narrow frontier with Afghanistan, and Beijing is concerned about violence spilling over its border if the Taliban take control in the country following the pullout of U.S. troops.

While not part of a formal alliance, Russia and China have aligned their military and foreign policies largely in opposition to those of the U.S. and its allies.

The official Xinhua News



Agency said the exercises began Monday and were presided over by Li Zuocheng, a member of the ruling Communist Party's Central Military Commission.

The exercise aims to "deepen the joint anti-terrorism operations between the Chinese and Russian militaries and demonstrate the firm determi-

nation and strength of the two countries to jointly safeguard international and regional security and stability," Xinhua said, citing Chinese and Russian officials.

"It reflects the new height of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era and of the strategic mutual trust,

pragmatic exchanges and coordination between the two countries," Xinhua said.

Russia has backed China in its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, over which Beijing clashed with common rival the U.S. yesterday [Macau time] at a high-level U.N. Security Council meeting on maritime security.

The area has seen "dangerous encounters between vessels at sea and provocative actions to advance unlawful maritime claims" that seek to "intimidate and bully other states lawfully accessing their maritime resources," U.S. Secretary of State Blinken said.

China's deputy ambassador, Dai Bing, responded by accusing the U.S. of becoming "the biggest threat to peace and stability in the South China Sea" and calling its "hype" in the Security Council "entirely politically motivated."

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

BEIJING RECALLS LITHUANIA AMBASSADOR IN ROW OVER TAIWAN OFFICE

CHINA yesterday recalled its ambassador to Lithuania and expelled the Baltic nation's top representative to Beijing over the country's decision to allow self-governing Taiwan to open an office in Lithuania under 'Taiwan' name.

Beijing claims Taiwan as its territory without the right to diplomatic recognition, although the island maintains informal ties with all major nations through trade offices that act as de facto embassies, including in the United States and Japan. Chinese diplomatic pressure has reduced Taiwan's formal diplomatic allies to just 15.

Taipei and Lithuania agreed last month that the office in the capital Vilnius — set to open this fall — will bear the name Taiwan rather than "Chinese Taipei," the term used in other countries in order not to offend Beijing.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry statement called on Lithuania to "immediately rectify its wrong decision, take concrete measures to undo the damage, and not to move further down the wrong path."

The statement referred to "potential consequences" for Lithuania if it allowed the office to open, but gave no details.

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry expressed regret over China's actions, and stressed that while respecting the "one China" principle, it stands ready to develop mutually beneficial ties with Taiwan, just as many other countries in the world do.

Along with intensifying diplomatic pressure, China has stepped up threats to bring Taiwan under its control, dispatching fighter jets and warships around the island.

"We also warn the Taiwan authorities that 'Taiwan independence' is a dead end and any attempt at separatist activities in the international arena is doomed to fail," the statement said.

"The Chinese Government and people have unswerving determination to achieve reunification of the country. The red line of safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity shall not be crossed," it said.

Taiwan courted ties with Eastern European nations following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, citing their past experiences under authoritarian rule and embrace of multiparty democracy and liberal values.

China leveraged its growing economic and diplomatic clout to ensure such relations were only unofficial, although that hasn't tempered Taiwan's desire to find new openings.

In February, under pressure from China, Guyana canceled permission for Taiwan to open a trade and investment office in the South American country.

Taiwan's first-ever representative office abroad to bear the name of Taiwan was established in Somaliland in 2020. The last time Taiwan established a representative office in Europe was in 2003 in Bratislava, Slovakia. **MDT/AGENCIES**

Court upholds Canadian's death sentence as Huawei case looms

A Chinese court yesterday rejected a Canadian drug convict's appeal of a death sentence in what appeared to be an effort to step up pressure on Canada to release a detained executive of tech giant Huawei.

The Canadian government condemned the ruling and appealed to China to grant clemency to Robert Schellenberg. His sentence was abruptly increased from a 15-year prison term to death after the Dec. 1, 2018, arrest of Meng Wanzhou on U.S. charges related to possible dealings with Iran.

In separate cases, two other Canadians, a former diplomat and an entrepreneur, were arrested on spying charges as China demanded Meng's release.

The Higher People's Court of Liaoning Province in the northeast rejected Schellenberg's appeal and sent the



case to the Chinese supreme court for review, as is required by law before death sentences can be carried out.

"We condemn the verdict in the strongest possible terms and call on China to grant Robert clemency," the Canadian ambassador to Beijing, Dominic Barton, told reporters. He criticized the penalty as "cruel and inhumane."

"His retrial and subsequent sentence were arbitrary," Barton said

by phone from the northeastern city of Shenyang, where he attended the appeals court hearing.

Schellenberg was convicted of smuggling 222 kilograms (448 pounds) of methamphetamine, according to the court. He was sentenced in November 2018 to 15 years and resented to death in January 2019 after a one-day retrial.

Former diplomat Michael Kovrig, and a Canadian entrepreneur,

Michael Spavor, were detained in December 2018 and later charged with spying.

A Canadian judge will hear final arguments in the next few weeks over whether Meng should be extradited. She has been living under house arrest in Vancouver.

Canada is, along with Australia and the Philippines, among a growing group of countries that face arrests of their citizens, trade boycotts and other pressure from Beijing over political disputes.

The United States and other governments have warned their citizens of a "heightened risk of arbitrary detention" in China for purposes other than law enforcement.

Barton said he would travel later Tuesday to the northeastern city of Dandong to see Spavor.

Asked when a ruling in Spavor's case might come, Barton said, "our sense is, it's tomorrow."

As for Kovrig, the ambassador said, "we have not received any indication of that."

Asked whether the three cases were linked to Meng's, Barton said, "I don't think it's a coincidence these are happening right now while events are going on in Vancouver." He said the case was "part of the geopolitical process of what is happening."

The ambassador said Canadian diplomats talked with Schellenberg after the ruling but declined to give details.

"He is remarkably composed," Barton said. "We had a good conversation."

Diplomats from the United States, Germany, Australia and France attended Tuesday's hearing, according to Barton. He expressed thanks to them and to other governments for expressing support for Canada.

Two other Canadians, Fan Wei and Xu Weihong, also were sentenced to death on drug charges in separate cases in 2019 as relations between Beijing and Ottawa deteriorated. **MDT/AP**

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

THE powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ripped South Korea for proceeding with military exercises with the United States that she said are an invasion rehearsal and warned yesterday that the North will work faster to strengthen its preemptive strike capabilities.

Kim Yo Jong's statement came after South Korean media reported that the allied militaries will begin four days of preliminary training before holding computer-simulated drills on Aug. 16-26.

Kim said she was given authority to release the statement, implying the message came directly from her brother.

Hours after her comments were published on state media, South Korea's defense and unification ministries said North Korean officials hadn't responded to their calls yesterday afternoon over inter-Korean hotlines, which had been disconnected for a year before North Korea agreed to reopen them in late July. The Koreans then described the move as a conciliatory gesture.

South Korean officials said they were closely monitoring the development, but that it wasn't immediately clear whether North Korea had cut the communication channels again.

Kim Yo Jong described South Korea's decision to hold joint exercises despite earlier warnings by the North as "perfidious behavior" that will push the allies into facing a "more serious security threat."

She said continuing the drills exposed the hypocrisy of the Biden administration's offers to resume dialogue over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. She said a stable peace won't be achieved on the Korean Peninsula unless the United States withdraws its troops and weapons from the South.

Kim said North Korea will "put more spur to further increasing the deterrent of absolute capacity to cope with the ever-growing military threats from the U.S.," including its capabilities for national defense and "powerful" preemptive strikes for "rapidly countering any military actions against us."

"(The drills) are the most vivid expression of the U.S. hostile policy towards (North Korea), designed to stifle our state by force, and an unwelcoming act of self-destruction for which a dear price should be paid as they threaten the safety of our people and further imperil the situation on the Korean Peninsula," Kim said.

"For peace to settle on the peninsula, it is imperative for the U.S. to withdraw its aggression troops and war hardware deployed in (South) Korea. As long as the U.S. forces stay in (South) Korea, the root cause for the periodic aggravation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula will never vanish."

AP PHOTO



Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un

North Korea vows stronger attack capabilities over allied drills

It wasn't immediately clear whether North Korea's threat to advance its preemptive strike capabilities signaled a resumption of testing activity.

North Korea ended a yearlong pause in ballistic tests in March by firing two short-range missiles into the sea, continuing a tradition of testing new U.S. administrations with weapons demonstrations and other provocations apparently aimed at measuring Washington's response and wresting concessions.

But North Korea hasn't conducted any known test launches since then as Kim Jong Un focused national efforts on fending off the coronavirus and salvaging a broken economy damaged further by pandemic border closures.

North Korea's angry reaction to the drills further diminishes South Korean hopes for improving bilateral ties, which rose after the North agreed to reopen long-stalled communication channels with the South.

But just days after the lines were restored, Kim Yo Jong warned that the planned military

drills between South Korea and the United States will undermine prospects for better inter-Korean ties.

Some analysts say North Korea's decision to restore the communication lines was mainly aimed at pushing Seoul to convince Washington to make concessions while nuclear diplomacy remains deadlocked.

Yo Jong said she was given authority to release the statement, implying the message came directly from her brother

"Kim Yo Jong's threatening statement demonstrates that North Korea will use even restrained U.S.-South Korea defense exercises as an excuse not to implement inter-Korean cooperation agreements and to justify its next military provocation," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

Kim Jong Un has pledged to

bolster his country's nuclear deterrent while urging his people to stay resilient in a struggle for economic self-dependence in the face of U.S.-led pressure. His government has so far rejected the Biden administration's overture for talks, demanding that Washington abandon its "hostile" policies first.

The United States keeps about 28,000 troops in South Korea to help deter potential aggression from North Korea, in a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War. The allies have yet to officially announce the details of this month's drills.

Boo Seung-Chan, spokesperson of South Korea's Defense Ministry, said in a briefing that the allies were discussing the "timing, scale and methods" of the summertime drills.

North Korea has long bristled at joint military exercises between South Korea and the United States, which the allies describe as defensive in nature, and often responds to them with its own weapons tests.

In the past few years, however, South Korea and the United States have canceled or downsized some of their training to support

now-dormant diplomacy aimed at ending the North Korean nuclear crisis or because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Korea has suspended its nuclear and long-range missile tests since 2018, when leader Kim Jong Un initiated diplomacy with South Korea and then-President Donald Trump while attempting to leverage his nuclear weapons for badly needed sanctions relief.

After the talks fell through in 2019, North Korea ramped up tests of new short-range, solid-fuel weapons to improve its ability to deliver nuclear strikes and overwhelm missile defense systems in South Korea and Japan.

Inter-Korean ties flourished during the diplomacy of 2018, during which Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in met three times and vowed to resume inter-Korean economic cooperation when possible, expressing optimism that the sanctions would end and allow such projects.

But North Korea later cut off ties with South Korea following the collapse of the second summit between Kim and Trump in 2019 when the Americans rejected North Korea's demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities. **MDT/AP**

USA

Fake Covid-19 vaccine cards online worry college officials

ROSELYN ROMERO,
SAN LUIS OBISPO (CALIF.)

AS the delta variant of the coronavirus sweeps across the United States, a growing number of colleges and universities are requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination for students to attend in-person classes. But the new mandate has opened the door for those opposed to getting the vaccine to cheat the system, according to interviews with students, education and law enforcement officials.

Across the internet, a cottage industry has sprung up to accommodate people who say they won't get vaccinated for either personal or religious reasons.

An Instagram account with the username "vaccinationcards" sells laminated COVID-19 vaccination cards for \$25 each. A user on the encrypted messaging app, Telegram, offers "COVID-19 Vaccine Cards Certificates," for as much as \$200 apiece.

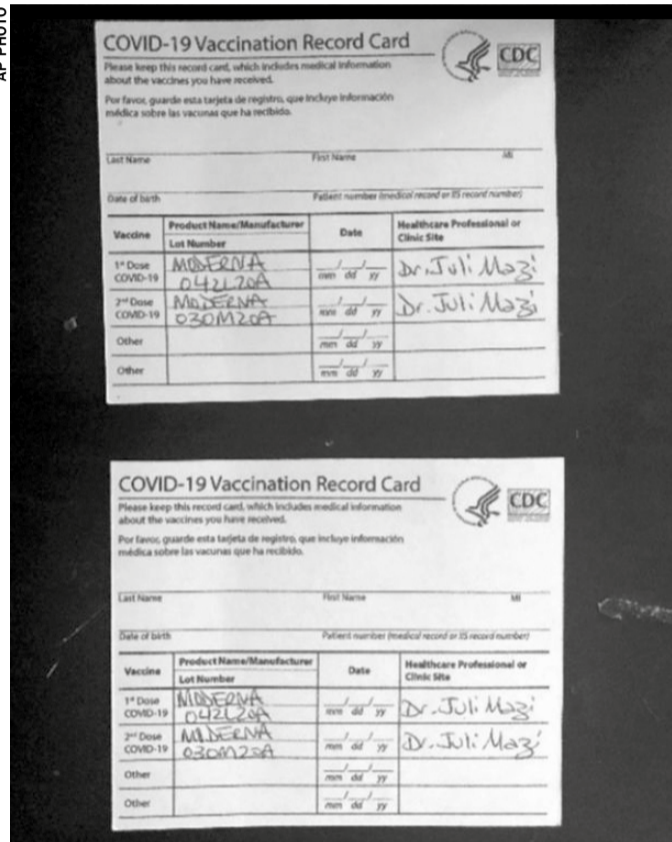
An increasing number of inquiries to these sites and similar ones appear to be from those who are trying to get fake vaccination cards for college.

A Reddit user commented on a thread about falsifying COVID-19 vaccination cards, saying, in part, "I need one, too, for college. I refuse to be a guinea pig."

According to a tally by The Chronicle of Higher Education, at least 675 colleges and universities now require proof of COVID-19 inoculations. The process to confirm vaccination at many schools can be as simple as uploading a picture of the vaccine card to the student's portal.

In Nashville, Vanderbilt University places a hold on a student's course registration until their vaccine record has been verified unless they have an approved medical accommodation or religious exemption.

The University of Michigan says it has checks in place to confirm employee and student vaccinations. A spokesman told The Associa-



This undated image shows two fake CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Cards that are part of a criminal complaint

ted Press the school has not encountered any problems so far with students forging their COVID-19 vaccination record cards.

But Benjamin Mason Meier, a global health policy professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, questions how institutions can verify those records.

"The United States, unlike most countries which have electronic systems in place, is basing its vaccination on a flimsy paper card," he said. "There need to be policies in place for accountability to make sure that every student is operating in the collective interest of the entire campus."

In a statement to AP, UNC said the institution conducts periodic verification of documents and that lying about vaccination status or falsifying documents is a violation of the university's standards and may result in disciplinary action. The school said it had not found any instances of a student uploading a fake vaccine card.

But other university staff and faculty have expressed their concern. Rebecca Williams, a research associate at UNC's Lineberger Com-

prehensive Cancer Center and Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, said while she is concerned by these claims, she isn't surprised.

"This is why I think the development of a reliable national digital vaccine passport app is very important for the sake of all the organizations and businesses that want to require proof of vaccination for employees, students, or business patrons," Williams said.

The AP spoke with students across the country who did not want to be identified but said they were aware of attempts to obtain fake cards.

Some school officials acknowledge it's impossible to have a foolproof system.

"As with anything that potentially requires a certification, there is the possibility for an individual to falsify documentation," said Michael Uhlenkamp, a spokesman for the chancellor's office at California State University. The school system, the largest in the nation, oversees about 486,000 students on 23 campuses.

In March, the concern over fake COVID-19 vaccination cards prompted the FBI to issue a joint statement

with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services urging people not to buy, create or sell fabricated vaccine cards. Unauthorized use of the seal of a government agency such as HHS or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a federal crime.

In April, a bipartisan coalition of 47 state attorneys general sent a letter to the CEOs of Twitter, Shopify and eBay to take down ads or links selling the bogus cards.

Many of the sites have blacklisted keywords related to fake cards, but places to buy the documents are still popping up on messaging apps, chat forums and the dark web.

Sellers on websites such as Counterfeit Center, Jimmy Black Market, and Buy Express Documents list COVID-19 vaccine cards, certificates and passports for sale, some costing 400 Euros or about \$473.49. An advertisement on the website Buy Real Fake Passport promises fake vaccination cards by the thousands.

"It is hiding under our noses. If you want it, you can find it out," said Saud Khalifah, founder and CEO of scam-detecting software Fakespot. "If we are seeing signs where things like Lollapalooza and other festivals are getting fake cards to gain entrance, the trend is just going to continue into these universities."

In July, the U.S. Department of Justice announced its first federal criminal fraud prosecution involving a fake COVID-19 immunization and vaccination card scheme. Juli A. Mazi, 41, a naturopathic physician in Napa, California, was arrested and charged with one count of wire fraud and one count of false statements related to health care matters.

Court documents allege she sold fake vaccination cards to customers that appeared to show that they had received Moderna vaccines. In some cases, the documents show Mazi herself filled out the cards, writing her own name, and purported Moderna "lot numbers" for a vaccine she had not in fact administered. For other customers, she provided blank CDC COVID-19 vaccination record cards and told each customer to write that she had administered a Moderna vaccine with a specified lot number.

Requiring vaccinations to attend class at colleges and universities has become a contentious political issue in some states. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1984 ZOLA BUDD IN RACE TRIP CONTROVERSY



The South African-born British athlete, Zola Budd, is again the centre of controversy following a disastrous accident during the women's 3,000m final at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

During the race she appears to have tangled with top American runner Mary Decker, putting Decker out of the race. The crowd's hostile reaction so unnerved the 18-year-old runner that she could only finish seventh.

Budd was already in the glare of the international spotlight after her application for British citizenship was fast-tracked earlier this year, in time for her to compete at the Games.

As a South African, she would have been ineligible to compete as the country is banned from international sport because of its policy of apartheid.

The decision to grant her citizenship has caused fury among anti-apartheid campaigners.

The incident has made the 3,000m final the most hotly-debated race of the Games so far.

The few seconds which destroyed both women's hopes of a medal have been shown on television from every angle in an attempt to decide which athlete was to blame.

They show that shortly after the half-way mark, with Zola Budd slightly in front, she and Mary Decker bumped into each other twice.

In the second encounter, Mary Decker's spikes caught Budd's heel.

Budd was, as usual, running barefoot. Her left leg shot out as she stumbled, tripping Decker.

The American pitched forward and crashed to the floor on the infield grass, clutching her right thigh.

She was unable to get up and was carried from the track in tears, her race over.

Zola Budd carried on, but as she did so, the largely American crowd began booing her from the stands.

Obviously upset, Budd finished well down the field, and Maricica Puica of Romania took the gold.

At a news conference after the race, a tearful Mary Decker told journalists, "Zola tried to cut in without being far enough ahead. There was no question but that she was in the wrong."

Track officials disagreed with her, however. After initially disqualifying Budd for obstruction, she was reinstated just one hour later once officials had viewed films of the race.

Zola Budd told journalists that she tried to apologise to Decker in the tunnel leading away from the track after the race, but was told abruptly, "Don't bother."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The issue of who was to blame for Mary Decker's fall is still the subject of heated debate. Zola Budd continued to compete in Britain for another four years, but could never shake off the political controversy, nor overcome criticism over the Decker incident. She continued to show what a remarkable athlete she was, however. She broke several British and world records, in 1985 taking the world 5,000m record by 10 seconds. She returned to South Africa in 1988. In 1992 a long-anticipated "re-match" with Mary Decker in a road race ended in anti-climax, with Decker winning easily. Zola Budd has now largely given up running competitively, although she still runs for pleasure near her home in Bloemfontein, South Africa, where she lives with her husband and three children.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Mental Mercury slips forward into sharp-minded Virgo today, increasing mental acuity on the work front. This transition offers you the chance to apply yourself and to direct long hours to your craft.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Your ruling planet, lover Venus, spends the day in a transformative link with illuminating Pluto, allowing for potent changes to take place in a smooth way.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Gemini people are guided by the quick-thinking, cosmic comedian planet, Mercury. Today's skies find Mercury on the move, as it departs from show-stopping Leo and slides forward into reflective Virgo.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Your focus is beginning to shift into new terrain today, Cancer. Messenger Mercury departs look-at-me Leo and slides forward into capable Virgo today.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Expressive Mercury departs from your sign and moves forward into analytical Virgo today, sending your mental energy towards the state of your resources, talents, and finances in the weeks to come.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Today's skies provide you with a welcome feeling of rebirth, Virgo. Your ruling planet, communicator Mercury, departs from self-focused Leo and slides forward into your sign.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

As a Libra, you're here to explore and unpack the art of intimate bonds. Today's skies highlight this narrative, as your ruling planet, lover Venus, locks into a supportive link with healer Pluto.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

The universe has been pushing you to explore your career story in a whole new light, Scorpio. This story gets pushed to the next level today, as messenger Mercury slides forward into grounded Virgo.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You've got all your eggs in one basket as of today, Sagittarius. Messenger Mercury slides forward into capable Virgo today, directing your mental energy towards getting ahead ambition wise.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Expressive Mercury moves forward into clear and capable Virgo today, redirecting your mental energy away from heavy intimacy issues and aiming it towards exploring new travel and educational plans.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Messenger Mercury slides out of showy Leo and trots into reflective Virgo today, where it steepens your mental energy in subconscious visions and unprocessed feelings.

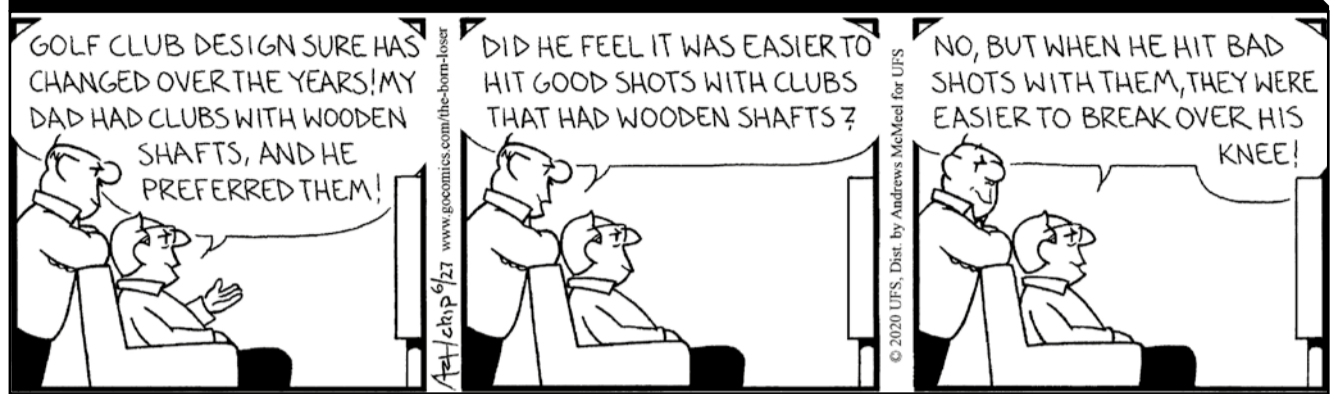


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Mental Mercury departs from dazzling Leo and slides forward into capable Virgo, redirecting your focus away from workaholic and aiming it towards creating functional collaborations.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

	8				3			
		4	2	6				
4	3				1			
9		1				6		
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MEDIUM

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HARD

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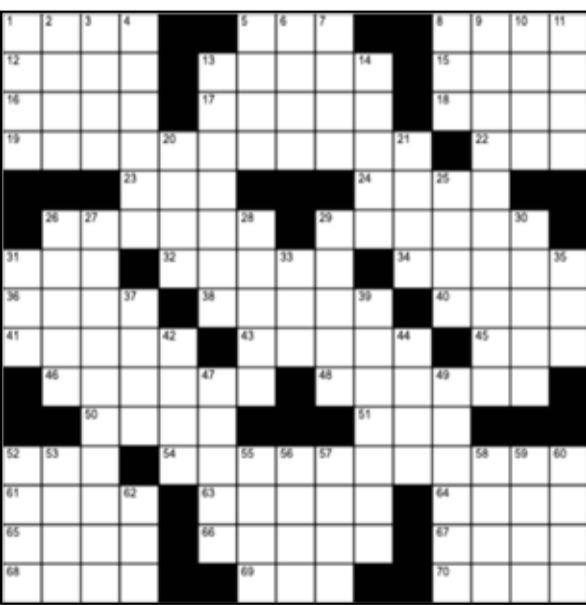
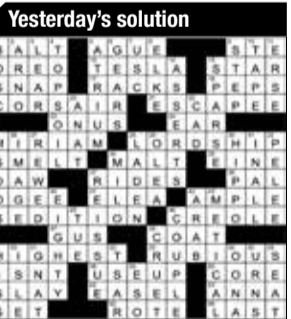
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	30	cloudy
Harbin	18	24	rain
Tianjin	25	32	rain
Urumqi	24	33	cloudy
Xi'an	26	32	rain
Lhasa	22	29	cloudy
Chengdu	27	34	rain
Chongqing	25	33	rain
Kunming	27	32	showers
Nanjing	21	28	thunderstorms
Shanghai	27	35	thunderstorms
Wuhan	26	29	rain
Hangzhou	17	24	thunderstorms
Taipei	24	28	rain
Guangzhou	15	29	cloudy
Hong Kong	24	32	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	19	27	overcast
Frankfurt	14	24	overcast
Paris	14	24	overcast
London	12	23	overcast
New York	23	29	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Univ. hotspot; 5- Large, brown-capped mushroom; 8- Gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans; 12- Swenson of "Benson"; 13- Killer whales; 15- Minister to; 16- Maize; 17- Water wheel; 18- Garbage boat; 19- Impressive; 22- Awfully long time; 23- Van Gogh had one later in life; 24- Insects; 26- Next day; 29- Prize; 31- ___ es Salaam; 32- Make one's case; 34- Despised; 36- Bald eagle's relative; 38- Flat shelf; 40- Hwys.; 41- What you don't know; 43- Considers; 45- Ballpark fig.; 46- Strikes; 48- Reserved; 50- Dutch cheese, wrapped in red wax; 51- Agent, briefly; 52- Proscribe; 54- Keep cold; 61- Female choir voice; 63- Racket; 64- Airline to Tel Aviv; 65- Box; 66- Outmoded; 67- Et ___ (and other men); 68- Gap; 69- Fannie ___; 70- Tabula ___;

DOWN: 1- Some pens; 2- Queue before Q; 3- Shrek, e.g.; 4- Invasive tumor; 5- Gator's kin; 6- Creamy-beige color; 7- Bucket; 8- Cooling units, for short; 9- Leader; 10- Switch back?; 11- In stitches; 13- Hot; 14- Swedish imports; 20- Diamond cover; 21- Battering Babe; 25- Stuff; 26- Female horses; 27- Decorative; 28- Garden intruders; 29- Shoved aside; 30- 1980s attorney general; 31- Ball belle; 33- Summer slaker; 35- Summer hrs.; 37- Geraint's beloved; 39- Appeared; 42- Toronto paper; 44- "Peter Pan" pirate; 47- Correct; 49- Raise; 52- Wild party; 53- Rival rival; 55- Froth; 56- Comic Rudner; 57- Of course!; 58- ___ breve; 59- Mai ___; 60- Charles Lamb's nom de plume; 62- Metal-bearing mineral;



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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jml property

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www.jmlproperty.com

f jmlmacau @ jmlproperty

FOR SALE

Taipa Village **HKD 3,780,000**
Ref: 2007 6001 650 ft² 1 1 1

FOR RENT

One Central **HKD 16,500/mth**
Ref: 2106 1001 1,292 ft² 2 2 2

Rain Dance Property

"We dance until it's SOLD!"

Traditional apartment **HKD 2,680,000**
Ref: 2103 6001 788 ft² 2 1 1

AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



GAMING

BETTING WEBSITE DRAFTKINGS BUYS GOLDEN NUGGET ONLINE

SPORTS betting website DraftKings Inc. is buying the online gambling subsidiary of Golden Nugget Inc. in a stock deal valued at \$1.56 billion, the two companies said yesterday [Macau time].

The acquisition of Golden Nugget Online Gaming gives Boston-based DraftKings a well-known brand in the casino and gambling world, and adds more than 5 million customers to DraftKings iGaming accounts, a statement from the companies said.

"Our acquisition of Golden Nugget Online Gaming, a brand synonymous with iGaming and entertainment, will enhance our ability to instantly reach a broader consumer base," said Jason Robins, CEO and board chairman of DraftKings.

Tilman Fertitta, the Houston-based billionaire chairman and CEO of Golden Nugget Online Gaming, also owns the NBA Houston Rockets, Landry's restaurants and Golden Nugget casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, New Jersey.

He pointed to promotional and marketing advantages for the two publicly traded companies.

"This transaction will add great value to the shareholders as two market leaders merge into a leading global player in digital sports, entertainment and online gaming," Fertitta said in the statement.

Golden Nugget Online shares traded up nearly 51% on news of the acquisition, closing at \$18.50.

DraftKings shares rose 1.49% to close at \$52.36. **MDT/AP**

TECHNOLOGY

SOFTBANK PROFIT DECLINES FOLLOWING SPRINT PERK A YEAR AGO

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

JAPANESE technology company SoftBank's fiscal first quarter earnings dropped 39% because of the absence of the cash benefit from the merger of Sprint, which boosted its profits a year ago.

Tokyo-based SoftBank Group Corp. reported a 761.5 billion yen (\$6.9 billion) profit for April-June yesterday, down from 1.26 trillion yen the previous year. Quarterly sales rose nearly 16% to 1.48 trillion yen (\$13 billion).

SoftBank, whose investment portfolio includes office-space sharing WeWork, Yahoo! Japan and Alibaba, a Chinese e-commerce company, as well as a myriad of other ventures, said it made investments totaling \$2.1 billion during the quarter.

SoftBank, which was the first to offer the Apple iPhone in the Japanese market, benefited last year when U.S. mobile carrier Sprint, which it owned, merged with T-Mobile, a European telecommunications company.

SoftBank profited this year from its investments, recording a net gain of 309.7 billion yen (\$2.8 billion) in SVF1, or "SoftBank Vision Fund One," and another gain of 97 billion yen (\$882 million) in SVF2. It also operates what's called a Latin America Fund, with 48 investments.

SoftBank had benefited from the recent stock boom, posting for the fiscal year that ended in March the biggest annual net profit for any company in Japanese history, surpassing Japan's top earner Toyota Motor Corp.

But analysts are raising con-

cerns that the value of some of SoftBank's holdings has been declining, saying worse may be ahead in the July-September quarter.

Chief Executive and founder Masayoshi Son had brushed off the record profit for the previous fiscal year as "a coincidence," promising to keep pursuing his dream of innovation, not just monetary gain.

Still, SoftBank is benefitting from the world's move online because of the coronavirus pandemic, including the shift to remote working and online entertainment, Son said.

"It was a meaningful year for us," he told reporters.

Son said SoftBank has become the world's top investor in artificial intelligence, accounting for 10% of the capital in unlisted AI

companies, including so-called unicorns, privately held startup companies valued over \$1 billion.

Second and third-ranked AI investors have invested a fraction of what SoftBank has, he said, stressing he is taking the risk because he is convinced the "AI revolution" is coming.

SoftBank income's also increased at Z Holdings Corp., which includes as group companies Yahoo! Japan, electronic payment operator PayPay Corp. and online clothing retailer ZoZo, as it completed the business integration of mobile applications company Line Corp. in March 2021.

"We've had bumps along the way, but we are gradually on the rise," Son said of the company's recent investments. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM Cotai recognized in TTG China Travel Awards



MGM Cotai was named the "Best Meeting & Conventions Hotel in Macau" award for two consecutive years at the 14th TTG China Travel

Awards, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

Hubert Wang, president & chief operating officer of

MGM, said, "We are honored to receive the 'Best Meeting & Conventions Hotel in Macau' award for the second time in a row. Since the opening of MGM Cotai in 2018, we have been providing various innovative meeting and convention solutions to our guests by deploying the state-of-the-art technologies of our facilities."

MGM Cotai offers approximately 39,000 square feet of combined event spaces. Having hosted numerous signature events and concerts, the MGM Theater is Asia's first dynamic theater that can hold up to 2,000 people in over 10 seating configurations.

Sands China organizes entrepreneurial seminar



Sands China Ltd. recently hosted a seminar for team members and local youth at The Parisian Macao about a success story of a local brand, as part of the company's ongoing professionalism education efforts.

Titled "Professionalism Education for Team Members: Macau Beer Macau Brand - Macau Story," the July 30 seminar aimed to encourage young people to approach challenges and opportunities with a creative and entrepreneurial mind-

set. Charles M. Choy, co-chairman of Macau Beer Company Limited, was invited as a guest speaker to share his views on how local brands can enter the market in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and thrive under the Macao SAR government's tourism+ initiative.

Moderated by Sam Chongnin, Sands China's vice president of corporate communications and community affairs, the event attracted around 210 participants, including Sands China's management team members, interns and students who have participated in the company's DSAL Internship Programme - Level Up Training and Career Experience Opportunities Programme.

TALES AZZONI, MADRID

FOOTBALL

After 17 seasons, post-Messi era begins in Spanish league

THE Spanish league season begins this weekend and it will be unlike any other in the last 17 years.

It will be the first without Lionel Messi, its all-time top scorer and one of its greatest players ever, who according to an AP source is moving to PSG.

For the first time since 2004, Barcelona will be without Messi because it couldn't sign the Argentina star to a new contract due to its troubled financial situation.

The last time the league didn't feature Messi, the likes of Diego Simeone, Zinedine Zidane and Luis Enrique were still playing instead of coaching.

Real Madrid forward Vinícius Júnior and Atlético Madrid forward João Félix were only 4 years old. Former Barcelona player Neymar was entering his teenage years and had just signed his first contract with the youth squad of Brazilian club Santos. Real Madrid target Kylian Mbappé was a 5-year-old whose bright future was as yet unknown.

Barcelona won the league only twice in the decade before Messi debuted. In the next 17 seasons, it won it 10 times. He won the league's scoring title a record eight times in that period, leaving with a record tally of 474 goals from 520 matches in the competition.

"When you lose the best player in history, you have to be realistic and understand that you lose a very important piece of the squad. He contributed with a lot of goals and assists," said Gerard Piqué, the veteran captain who arrived at Barcelona three years after Messi's debut.

Coach Ronald Koeman, who was in his early managing years when Messi debuted, remained optimistic going into the home opener against Real Sociedad on Sunday.

"Despite Messi's departure, we are very excited about going into this new season, about our squad, about our new players," Koeman said Sunday before Barcelona's 3-0 win over Juventus in its final preseason match.

Dutch international Memphis Depay, the club's star signing in the offseason, had promising performances in preseason. Sergio Agüero, though, won't be able to debut until mid-October because of an injury. Antoine Griezmann



AP PHOTO

and youngster Ansu Fati will continue to contribute in attack, while Pedri González will carry a bigger playmaking role in midfield.

Real Madrid is also not doing well financially because of the coronavirus pandemic, and lost a star player going into the new season - Sergio Ramos, who had been with the club since 2005 and now

will play for Paris Saint-Germain. He wanted to stay but Madrid decided not to renew his contract to save money.

Fellow central defender Raphael Varane also left, joining Manchester United, and in came David Alaba from Bayern Munich.

Madrid, which opens at Alavés on Saturday, will be coached by

Carlo Ancelotti after Zidane quit at the end of last season. It will continue to feature Karim Benzema, Eden Hazard, Toni Kroos, Marcelo, Luka Modric and Thibaut Courtois. Also in the team will be Gareth Bale, back from his loan spell at Tottenham.

Atlético Madrid, which last season triumphed by taking advantage of the struggles of Barcelona and Madrid, will defend the title with almost all of its players back under the command of Simeone.

Argentina midfielder Rodrigo de Paul was added to the squad that again will be led by Luis Suárez, the former Barcelona striker who scored 21 league goals last season and was key for Atlético. Félix will remain another weapon in attack, while the defense will be anchored by goalkeeper Jan Oblak. The team opens at Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Julen Lopetegui's Sevilla will remain an outside contender after being in the title race until late last season. **MDT/AP**

AD



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The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



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OPINION

World Views

Kelsey Sheehy, MDT/NerdWallet

**MILLENNIAL MONEY:
 READY FOR RESULTS?
 FIND A MENTOR**

As your financial and professional lives become more complex, going it alone will only get you so far.

We all need advice, encouragement and a sounding board from time to time. Leaning on family and friends can help, but it can be difficult for loved ones to give you objective advice.

That's why you need a mentor. Or mentors.

You can have a career mentor. A money mentor. A life mentor. A spiritual mentor. A relationship mentor. A business mentor. Basically, any area of your life in which you need guidance or accountability, there's a mentor for that.

These relationships don't appear out of thin air. You need to seek out a mentor and put in the work to see results.

Approaching someone and asking "Will you be my mentor?" feels a little awkward. But mentorship doesn't need to be that formal.

"I think the most valuable mentorships are the ones that arrive more organically," says Alison Green, creator of Ask a Manager, a work advice website.

Find someone you connect with, whether at work, in your social circle or in your spiritual community, and start having deeper conversations. Ask for their perspective and use them as a sounding board.

That person may be two decades your senior, or they may be close to your age. In some cases, a mentor closer in age can better relate to your experiences at the workplace, in relationships and in life, Green says. It's still fresh for them.

There are situations where a structured, formal mentorship is the way to go. If you're trying to start a business, for example, you need someone who sees your vision and has the expertise to help you execute it.

That person may not already exist in your orbit. But you can find them through organizations like Score, a national volunteer organization that offers free business mentorship.

Whether you want to excel as a manager, save for retirement or become more involved with your house of worship, defining your goal can help narrow your mentor search, says Bridget Weston, CEO of Score.

"Try to understand your goals and what you want out of a mentor relationship," Weston says. "Then you can approach them and say, 'This is what I'm looking for. Does this work for you?'"

A mentorship is a relationship, and even the easiest relationships require time, energy and focus. You also need to be open and vulnerable.

— DON'T HOLD BACK: Confessing your fears and doubts won't happen on day one, meeting one. But as the mentorship grows, try to open up.

"You have to gel with your mentor in order to make the most of that relationship," Weston says. "If you're holding back or not being 100% authentic, you're not going to get the most out of it."

If you don't feel comfortable doing so after a few sessions, consider finding a different mentor.

— DO THE WORK: This isn't a college class where you can skim the assignment five minutes beforehand and wing it during the class discussion. To get the most out of your mentorship, take notes during meetings, prepare questions in advance and, most importantly, work on the things you say you will.

"Here's the catch: If you're not working on them, they don't mean anything to you," Jones says. "If they don't mean anything to you, either you're in the wrong mentor/mentee relationship or you are not ready."

— CLOSE THE LOOP: Find ways to show your appreciation and build the relationship. This step can be as simple as telling your mentor how you put their advice into action.

"If you have a big conversation with them about an issue you're grappling with, come back to them and tell them what you ended up deciding. Close that loop," Green says. "It's so gratifying when someone comes back to you and says, 'Here's what I did and here's how your advice helped me.'"

Nationwide demonstrations are planned across Poland yesterday against a bill widely viewed as an effort by the country's ruling nationalist party to silence an independent, U.S.-owned television broadcaster critical of the government.

At stake in the bill's passage is Poland's reputation for media freedom and as a place for foreign companies to do business. If it passes it is also likely to strain relations with the country's strategic ally, the United States.

Technically, the bill would prevent non-European owners from having controlling stakes in Polish media companies.

In practice, it would push the U.S. company Discovery Inc. to sell its controlling stake in the broadcaster TVN, which operates many channels — most notably TVN24, an all-news station. TVN also has a flagship evening news program on its main channel that is watched by millions daily.

The ruling party, Law and Justice, has long sought to nationalize the media sector, citing national security, and says the law would bring Poland into line with other European countries, including France and Germany, which limit foreign ownership in the media sector.

**HONG KONG LEADER
 SUPPORTS RETALIATORY
 SANCTIONS LAW**

HONG Kong leader Carrie Lam expressed support yesterday for legislation allowing retaliatory sanctions after the U.S. and other Western governments punished city officials over the ongoing crackdown on democracy activists.

Lam said the anti-foreign sanctions law should be adopted in Hong Kong via local legislation, rather than imposed by Beijing, and that she has told the Chinese government about her views.

Separately, the pro-democracy Professional Teachers' Union — the city's largest single-industry trade union with 95,000 members — said it has disbanded because the "social and political environment has changed in recent years."

The disbandment came after the government severed ties with the union last week and accused it of spreading anti-Beijing and anti-government sentiment. The cutting of ties came hours after Chinese state media called the union a "malignant tumor" that should be eradicated.

Lam's support for the adoption of the anti-sanctions law in Hong Kong came after China implemented a broad anti-sanctions law in June. Anyone



hit with retaliatory sanctions could be subject to visa restrictions, have their assets seized or frozen and be banned from doing business with any Chinese company or individual in China.

The law comes after the U.S. slapped sanctions on dozens of Chinese and Hong Kong officials — including Lam — over their role in suppressing Hong Kong's autonomy.

"There are external forces, or foreign governments or Western media, which would make use of the opportunity to weaken our international financial center status as well as a weakening confidence in Hong Kong," Lam said.

Beijing imposed a national security law on Hong

Kong last year, aiming to crack down on dissent following months of anti-government protests in the city that at times descended into violence. Over 100 pro-democracy figures have been arrested under the national security law.

Critics have slammed the crackdown on political dissent, saying the former British colony is losing the freedoms it was promised when it was handed over to Chinese control in 1997.

This year, Hong Kong changed its election laws to reduce the number of directly elected lawmakers and give a largely pro-Beijing committee the leeway to nominate lawmakers aligned with Beijing. MDT/AP

Saudi Arabia announced the arrest of 207 employees across about a dozen government ministries in the latest sweep by an anti-corruption body empowered by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Those detained were not named and it was unclear when the arrests were made. The kingdom's National Anti-Corruption Commission, known as "Nazaha", announced the arrests late on Monday.



Russian authorities have opened a new criminal case against the two closest allies of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, the latest in a series of moves to stifle his already embattled team. The Investigative Committee yesterday announced a probe against Leonid Volkov and Ivan Zhdanov, accusing them of raising funds for extremist groups. The charge carries a punishment of up to eight years in prison.



Germany's train drivers plan to go on a nationwide strike, the head of the train driver's union said after announcing that 95% of the union members had voted in favor of the action. The head of the GDL union, Claus Weselsky, told reporters the strike would start with all cargo trains at 7 p.m. (1700GMT) yesterday and expand to include passenger trains from 2 a.m. (0000GMT) today until 2 a.m. Friday.



Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said that he discussed the reopening of the U.S.-Mexico border, immigration and cooperation in facing the Covid-19 pandemic in a call with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris. The president did not provide additional details of their discussions in a brief message he put out on Twitter afterward.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



From the art. Children wearing masks to protect from the coronavirus pose for photos near a heart-shaped ribbon sculpture in Beijing.