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UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR RESIDENTS AT 3.7% FOR JUNE-AUGUST DOWN BY 0.1 PERCENTAGE POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS PERIOD

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MASS TESTING ENDED WITH OVER 645,000 NEGATIVE SAMPLES

P3

JAPAN ELECTIONS TODAY: NEXT PRIME MINISTER-ELECT MUST WORK QUICKLY ON VIRUS, ECONOMY, CHINA; FORMER TOP DIPLOMATS LEAD THE POLLS

P7

AP PHOTO



China A military drone whose manufacturer says it can cruise for 20 hours at 15,000 meters was among Chinese warplanes, missiles and other weapons technology shown in public for the first time yesterday at the opening of the country's biggest air show. The Chinese space program planned to unveil a rocket for crewed space flight capable of carrying a 25-ton payload to lunar orbit at the 13th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, an official newspaper said.

Taiwan's legislature yesterday descended into a rowdy brawl, after opposition lawmakers interrupted an important policy address and rushed the podium. Opposition lawmakers pushed their way to the speaker's podium as the chamber's head, Su Tseng-chang, was opening his annual address on the government's performance with a focus on national security and the economy. In the ensuing melee, a few lawmakers were shoved to the ground and others poured out bottles of water onto their opponents, while Su was unable to give his speech.

AP PHOTO



Japan's government announced yesterday that the coronavirus state of emergency will end this week to help rejuvenate the economy as infections slow. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said the emergency will end tomorrow and virus restrictions will be eased gradually "in order to resume daily lives despite the presence of the virus." He said the government will create more temporary COVID-19 treatment facilities and continue vaccinations to prepare for any future resurgence.

More on backpage

CASE 71...

More yellow zones drawn after four new cases of Covid detected yesterday, three directly linked to 'patient zero' that flew to Macau from Turkey, via Singapore

GOLDEN CROWN
GOV'T DISCUSSES POSSIBILITY OF NEGLIGENCE AT QUARANTINE HOTEL

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THE CONVERSATION

SINOPHARM AND SINOVAC VACCINES: HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THEY?



JOHN HART
CLINICAL RESEARCHER,
MURDOCH CHILDREN'S
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

FIONA RUSSELL
SENIOR PRINCIPAL RESEARCH
FELLOW; PEDIATRICIAN;
INFECTIOUS DISEASES
EPIDEMIOLOGIST, THE
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

IN June, China reached a milestone of having administered more than one billion doses of its homegrown COVID-19 vaccines [currently over two billion], the majority of which were developed by local companies Sinovac and Sinopharm.

What's more, hundreds of millions of doses of these vaccines have been shipped to more than 80 countries worldwide.

Sinopharm was given emergency approval by the World Health Organization (WHO) in May this year, and Sinovac in June.

But what do we know about these vaccines? How do they work, are they safe, and how effective are they in the real world?

WHAT TYPE OF VACCINE ARE THEY?

Both are inactivated virus vaccines. This means they're made from viral particles produced in a lab, which are then inactivated so they can't infect you with COVID-19. Many other vaccines use similar platforms, including injectable polio, Hepatitis A and flu vaccines.

Both companies use similar technology, and the vaccines are mixed with an adjuvant, which is a substance added to vaccines to stimulate a stronger immune response.

The vaccines contain many proteins the immune system can respond to, stimulating the production of antibodies to fight COVID-19.

ARE THEY SAFE?

Side-effects common after most other COVID-19 vaccines, such as fever and fatigue, were found to be uncommon after Sinovac or Sinopharm.

Once vaccines are approved and being used in large populations, they're continuously monitored for very rare side effects. No significant safety concerns have been identified amid Sinovac's rollout in China, Brazil, Indonesia and Chile.

In saying that, there were very low numbers of adverse events identified overall, which would suggest substantial under-reporting.

For example, there were only 49 serious adverse events reported following 35.8 million Sinovac doses administered in China.

In a population of that size, we'd expect to see a larger number of illnesses and deaths recorded in the few weeks after vaccination just by coincidence alone, even if not causally related to the vaccine.

Only 79 people reported mostly mild adverse events following 1.1 million doses of Sinopharm in China, much lower than usual rates of adverse event reporting following immunisation.

A potential side effect of particular concern is what's called "vaccine-associated enhanced disease". This is a very rare side effect of some other vaccines which use a similar "inactivated" technology to the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines.

It occurs when a vaccinated person is exposed to the virus and

develops a serious inflammatory condition, and results in them getting more severe symptoms than they would have without the vaccination.

This hasn't been reported for these vaccines to date, although WHO recommends ongoing safety monitoring to identify any cases that occur.

WHAT WAS THEIR EFFICACY IN CLINICAL TRIALS?

Sinovac's efficacy at preventing symptomatic infection was 51% in Brazil, 67% in Chile, 65% in Indonesia, and 84% in Turkey. The differences in results may be due to different variants circulating in each country at the time and differences in the populations included in the studies.

Sinopharm's efficacy in preventing symptomatic infection was 78% in UAE, Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan combined.

As with all the COVID-19 vaccines for which data are available, efficacy against the more severe outcomes is greater. Efficacy against hospitalisation for Sinovac in Chile, Brazil and Turkey was 85%, 100% and 100%, respectively.

However, few elderly people with underlying health issues were enrolled into these studies.

For Sinopharm, efficacy against hospitalization was 79%, although few women were enrolled in these studies.

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THEY IN THE REAL WORLD?

Data published in April from a large real-world study in Chile suggests Sinovac is 67% effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infection. It's effectiveness

against hospitalisation was 85%, ICU admission 89%, and death 80%.

Sinopharm's effectiveness against symptomatic infection in Bahrain was 90%.

However, it's concerning there have been increases in infections in some countries where these vaccines have been extensively used, but detailed reports are not available.

For example, Seychelles has fully vaccinated 68% of its population, mostly with Sinopharm and the remainder with AstraZeneca.

Seychelles has recently experienced a surge in cases, which suggests the herd immunity threshold may not have been reached. The exact threshold for this is unknown but is influenced by variants in circulation, the number of people vaccinated, and the effectiveness of the vaccines.

Detailed epidemiological studies are required to investigate this but news reports suggest 20% of those hospitalised and 37% of new active cases are fully vaccinated.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have also achieved high vaccination coverage, predominantly with Sinopharm. They also experienced recent COVID-19 surges, and are offering a booster dose of Pfizer six months after two Sinopharm doses, because of concerns two doses of Sinopharm may not provide sufficient protection.

However, there's no data publicly available to determine whether this mix and match schedule is safe and produces a protective immune response.

In Mongolia, the rapid vaccine rollout of four different vaccines, including Sinopharm, suggests initial good effectiveness but an increase in cases suggests short-term protection only, and perhaps little effect on transmission.

Also, in June, there increasing concerns about surging cases in Indonesia. Almost all health workers have been vaccinated with the Sinovac vaccine but some developed severe disease.

Chile has also achieved high vaccine coverage, mostly with Sinovac. Around 75% of the adult population has received one dose, and 58% two doses.

Despite this, a surge in infections and consistent high numbers of deaths, in June, has prompted a blanket lockdown across the capital, Santiago. The spread may be related to the more transmissible Gamma variant, which first emerged in Brazil.

However, in a small town of 45,000 in Brazil, very high vaccination coverage with Sinovac of 95% of adults, reportedly decreased symptomatic infections by 80% and deaths by 95%.

There's currently no data on how effective Sinopharm is against any variant of concern despite its use in more than 50 countries.

For Sinovac, effectiveness against symptomatic infection with the Alpha and Gamma variants in Chile was 67%.

In Brazil, with circulation of the Gamma variant, one pre-print study suggested effectiveness against symptomatic infection was 42%.

Both vaccines are effective against severe COVID-19.

However, it is critical that researchers and health authorities determine vaccine effectiveness against variants and their effect on transmission, and their safety profiles. For countries that have community transmission this includes "vaccine-associated enhanced disease".

As for any vaccine, we also need to understand how effective these vaccines are in older people, adolescents, pregnant women and immunocompromised groups, and how long protection lasts.

We need as many vaccines as possible to tackle the pandemic. But now these vaccines are in widespread use and will be further distributed by COVAX, a global alliance which provides vaccine doses to low-and middle-income nations, it's essential the safety and effectiveness of all vaccines continues to be closely monitored. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

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

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

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

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

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Neighborhoods of three new cases placed under yellow zone

ANTHONY LAM

THE neighborhoods near the residences of Macau's latest three Covid-19 patients will only be classified as yellow zones not red zones, pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM), said yesterday.

After recording three new Covid-19 cases by early afternoon, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center pulled forward yesterday's press briefing by two hours.

The three new cases are believed to be connected to case No. 64, a returnee from Turkey.

Following the detection of the 65th and 66th patients, who are both security guards at the Golden Crown China Hotel and believed to be related to the 64th patient, all security guards and janitors at the hotel have been put under quarantine, Lo announced. Other workers, meanwhile, have been put into close-loop management, meaning that they will temporarily be accommodated in the hotel.

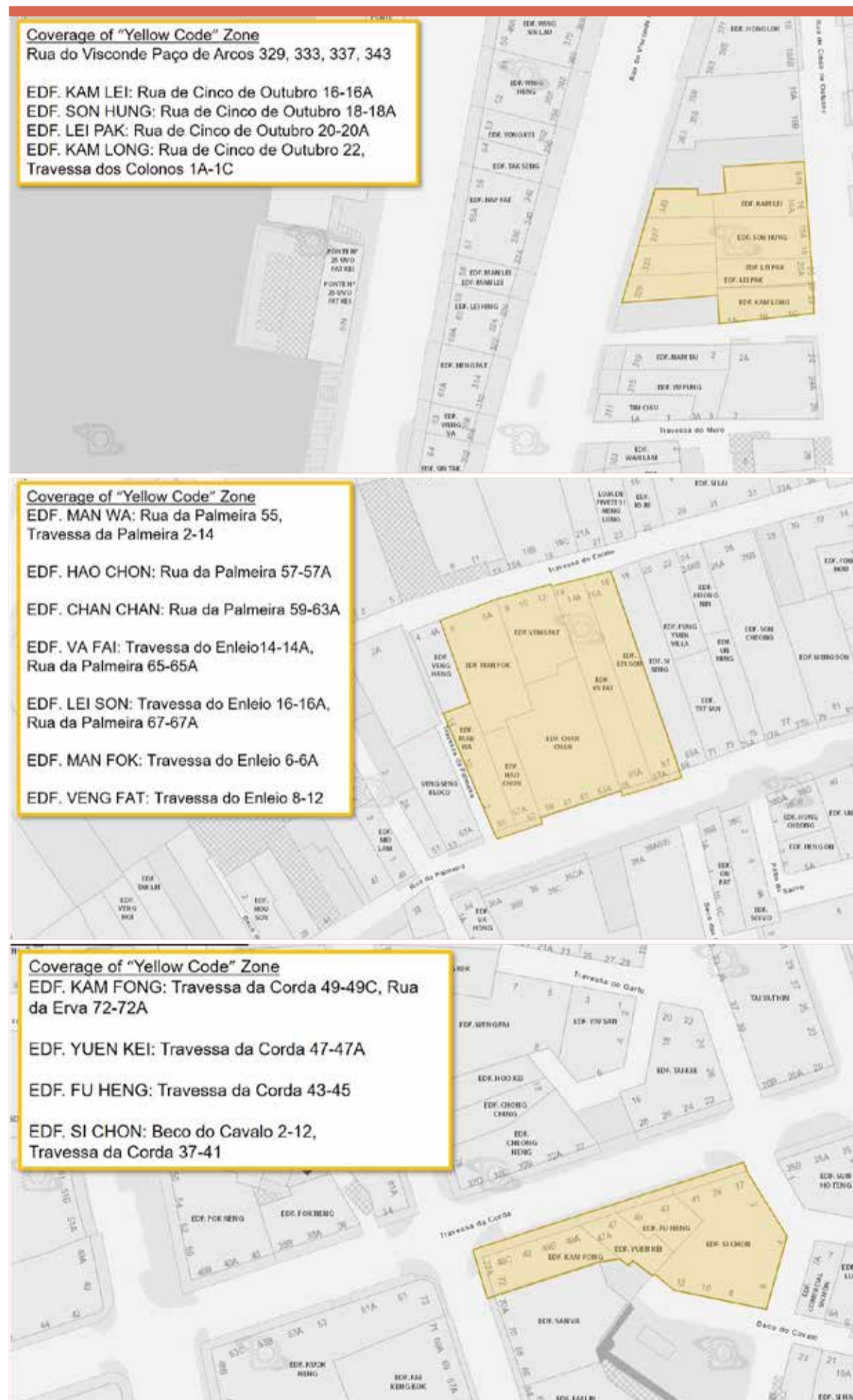
The 68th, 69th and 70th patients have been diagnosed using regular polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests on quarantined individuals. They were detected at the third regular test.

Although the three new patients began quarantine days ago, for safety reasons, the Health Bureau (SSM) has designated certain areas near the residences of the three patients as yellow zones. Individuals within the zones will be tested once for the virus and will be only released after a negative result is returned. Even so, their health code will remain yellow for the next 14 days to indicate that they will need to conduct health self-management.

On the decision not to designate a red zone after the detection of the latest three patients, Lo explained that the patients have been quarantined for days, which suggests that the risk to the community is rather small.

"The 65th and 66th patients have a history of community movements prior to being diagnosed. We can't rule out the possibility of their spreading the disease within the vicinity of their residences," Lo said. "Therefore, we have made designation of yellow zones, which indicate an entry-only restriction and multiple PCR tests."

Furthermore, he explained, each of the three new patients have taken at least two PCR tests at the commencement of their quarantine period. The negative test results have lowered the risk



of their spreading the virus in their neighborhood.

The designation of yellow zone in the vicinity of their residences, on the other hand, is for enhanced safety. "Considering that Macau is a close community, we need a higher bar [for disease containment]," the pulmonologist added.

Following the detection of the recent batch of new patients, the SSM have quarantined a total of 1,640 related personnel, of whom

58 are close contacts, 1,449 intercepts and 133 second-level close contacts.

At the current stage, another round of the citywide PCR test is not required, Lo added.

71ST CASE HAD NO CONTACT WITH COVID PATIENT

At 7:20 p.m. yesterday, the center announced the detection of the city's 71st Covid-19 patient.

The 38-year-old male patient

works in the surveillance camera control center at the Treasure Hotel, which is adjacent and connected to the Golden Crown China Hotel.

Authorities stressed that the patient did not have any contact with guests or other workers in the hotel.

It is believed that the patient contracted the virus in the employee changing room, which is shared by workers from both

connected hotels.

He has been identified as a contact of the 65th and 66th patients, and he commenced quarantine on September 25.

PCR tests conducted on September 22 and 24 yielded negative results. The test yesterday yielded a positive result, causing him to be diagnosed with the disease.

The man has been fully vaccinated: he took the SinoPharm vaccine on April 24 and the Sino-Vac vaccine on June 14. Both are inactivated vaccines.

For the time being, the patient has not reported any discomfort or symptoms. He has been transferred to the Public Health Clinical Center for treatment.

NO UPDATE ON CLASS SUSPENSION: DSEDJ

Messages circulated on the internet yesterday concerning further class suspension. On behalf of the Education Bureau and Youth Development Bureau, a department under the Response and Coordination Center, neurosurgeon Tai Wa Hou, medical director of the public Conde São Januário Hospital, reiterated that non-tertiary education classes will be suspended until October 3. Tertiary education institutions have suspended physical lectures.

For the time being, the education bureau has not made any decision on further action.

MASS TESTING ENDS WITH 645K SAMPLES

The second citywide PCR test of SARS-CoV-2, conducted over 72 hours, concluded at 3 p.m. yesterday.

Lo announced that a total of 645,230 samples were collected over the three days. All samples have tested negative.

Meanwhile, 24 hours prior to the commencement of the citywide PCR test, 44,536 people took PCR tests at their own expense. This tally has been included in the citywide campaign, bringing the total up to 689,766 people.

Lo thanked all workers and the population for assisting with and participating in the campaign.

GOLDEN CROWN GUESTS TO BE RELOCATED

To strengthen controls at the quarantine hotel, the SSM has relocated all guests, about 150 persons, to another quarantine hotel, Lo announced.

Furthermore, workers at the hotel who are not security guards or janitors will be put into quarantine as well.

In response to the latest five immigration-related cases, all workers at higher risk at other quarantine hotels will be put under "the highest degree of close-loop management."

OVER 450 IN TEMPORARY SHELTER

From September 25 to midday of yesterday, 454 residents were housed in the Temporary Shelter of Social Welfare Bureau located at Rua Leste da Ilha Verde, Edifício do Bairro da Ilha Verde. The highest number of persons accommodated in a single day reached 164: a figure consisting mainly of workers who originally lived in mainland China. To try to meet the need for emergency accommodation, Social Welfare Bureau has temporarily expanded the number of beds from 100 to 171. Due to the shortage of public resources, Social Welfare Bureau is appealing to employers to provide accommodation for foreign workers if possible, as part of working together to control the pandemic.

GOV'T WARNS PUBLIC NOT TO SPREAD FAKE NEWS

The Civil Protection Operations Centre is calling on the public not to deliberately fabricate and disseminate false information. The authority noted that members of the public should not intentionally spread false information that they are fully aware may give rise to public fear or disturbance. Doing so may contravene Article 26 of Law no. 11/2020 (Civil Protection Legal Regime) and incur criminal liability. Members of the public are advised to heed official announcements and information.

PJ WARNS OF PHONE SCAMS

A member of the "Judiciary Police Friends of Crime Prevention for Women" informed the Judiciary Police (PJ) that she had recently received a call from a mobile with a local ID in which the caller, speaking in Cantonese, claimed to be calling from the "Bureau of Telecommunications Regulation." The caller warned her that her phone had shown signs of a fault and would soon stop working, and that she should press "2" to obtain further details. PJ noted that telephone scams involving the impersonation of government officials have increased recently, advising residents to remain vigilant against fraud.



COVID-19

MGTO, SSM DISCUSS POSSIBILITY OF VIOLATION

ANTHONY LAM

FURTHER evaluation is needed to decide whether the quarantine hotel will be penalized following the discovery of new cases on the premises, Liz Lam Tong Hou, head of Public Relations Division of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), stressed.

She explained that the matter needs further study before any decisions can be made. The MGTO will look into the matter with the SSM to determine if the failure of fully implementing disease control guidelines constituted a potential violation of the Contagious Disease Prevention and Control Law.

Meanwhile, provided that quarantine hotels, the most recent case being the Golden Crown China Hotel, have not violated hotel-related laws and regulations, they will not face penalties from the MGTO concerning the cases.

This was one of the most hotly discussed topics at yesterday's press briefing. Lo said that instead of identifying culprits, the health authority is more concerned with assisting individuals and organizations to refine their infection control measures.

"By receiving this mission [of accommodating quarantined people], these hotels are prone to huge risks as well," Lo said. "We can't blame them if any problems arise from the fact that they have been making a contribution to the society."

Lo asked who, in the future, would be willing to undertake such responsibilities faced with such a substantial liability.

NO UPDATES ON IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS FROM ZHUHAI

Cheong Kin Ian, head of the Division of Police Communications and Public Relations of the Unitary Police Service, has clarified that, at the time of the press briefing yesterday, no updates to Zhuhai's changing immigration restrictions on entrants from Macau had been received.

He added that authorities from Macau and Zhuhai were negotiating on further updates to immigration restrictions, which will be announced in due course.

Tested residents receive text messages to take the NAT

LYNZY CALLES

SOME residents have reportedly received text messages from authorities requiring that they take a Covid-19 test, despite these residents having been already tested.

According to sources, the individuals have received a message noting that

they haven't been tested and demanding that they go to a paid nucleic acid test station.

"Since you have not taken Covid-19 test within the stipulated period, your health code is now yellow. Please go for self-paid testing immediately [...] or else you shall be subject to medical observation at

a designated venue for 14 days under relevant regulation," the message reads.

The Health Bureau system was down a few times last night, making it difficult for those wishing to submit an inquiry regarding the text messages they had received.

Yesterday, the Novel Coronavirus Response and

Coordination Center announced that citizens who wish to obtain information or clarification, besides inquiring by telephone (2870 0800), email (info.cdc@ssm.gov.mo) or text message (63337492), can also use the online platform for seeking information and support that was set up by the authorities.

The platform can be accessed using the following link: <https://www.ssm.gov.mo/covidq>.

The second citywide mass testing for Covid-19 came to an end by 3 p.m.

yesterday. All tests have returned negative results.

645,230 people were tested under the scheme, while 44,536 underwent paid tests.

Authorities remind residents that if they are unable to take the nucleic acid test by the set deadline, their health code will be changed to yellow.

Under the law, they may be refused entry to public buildings and the use of public transport, and it may be impossible for them to leave the Macau SAR.

CE RECEIVES FLAG OF NATIONAL GAMES

THE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has received the flag of the National Games of China, as a symbol of Macau's role as co-host of the 15th National Games in 2025.

The flag-handover ceremony was held at the closing of the 14th National Games on Monday in Xi'an city, Shaanxi Province.

Macau will organize and host the 15th Games jointly with Guangdong and Hong Kong.

Also attending Monday's flag-handover ceremony were the Governor of Guangdong, Ma Xing



grui, and the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong, Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor.

Ho commented that co-organizing the 15th National Games will enable Macau to take part

in the highest-level and largest domestic sporting games in the country.

He added that Macau will work closely with Guangdong and Hong Kong to organize the 2025 event according to the

strict principles of "simplicity, safety and brilliance."

The National Games are organized by the General Administration of Sport.

As announced by the State Council on August 26, Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau will co-organize the 15th edition, the first time several places have organized a single edition of the National Games, and the first time for Macau to be involved in the organization of the event.

Macau sent a 154-strong delegation to

Shaanxi for the Games. Macau athletes took part in a total of 17 events, including: water sports (swimming, synchronized swimming, and diving), cycling (road and track), triathlon, beach volleyball, table tennis, badminton, tennis, karate-do, judo, taekwondo, fencing, boxing, wushu (taolu and sanda formats), shooting, canoeing, and sailing (RS:X windsurfing and Laser-class dinghy).

Macau athlete Jugo Kuok Kin Hang claimed a bronze in the men's kata (routine) event. It was the first medal won by a local athlete in the history of the National Games. LV

Unemployment rate at 3.7%

LYNZY VALLES

THE general unemployment rate for June-August 2021 was 2.8% and the unemployment rate for local residents was 3.7%, down by 0.1 and 0.2 percentage points respectively from the previous period (May-July 2021).

However, the underemployment rate increased by 0.2 percentage points to 3.7%, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service.

The labor force living in Macau totaled 387,000 and the labor force participation rate was 68.5%. Total employment was 376,300 and the number of employed residents totaled 279,600, up by 3,400 and 4,600 respectively from the previous period.

Analyzed by industry, employment in Gaming & Junket Activities and Restaurants & Similar Activities increased, while that in Wholesale & Retail Trade decreased.

The number of unemployed people dropped to 10,600, down 400 from the previous period. Most unemployed jobseekers previously



worked in Gaming & Junket Activities and in the Construction sector. Meanwhile, with fresh graduates entering the labor market, the proportion of new entrants to the labor market seeking their first job increased 3.3 percentage points to 12.5% of the total unemployed.

The city saw around 4,300 fresh graduates enter the job market, according to the survey conducted by the General Association of Chinese Students of Macau (AECM).

Compared to new graduates in previous years, this year's

cohort will face a difficult global employment environment, which has been significantly affected by economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The AECM research suggests that the average monthly salary that employers offer fresh graduates is around MOP 10,000.

Meanwhile, the number of the underemployed rose by 1,000 from the previous period to 14,400, with the majority working in Gaming & Junket Activities and in the Construction sector.

In comparison with June-

-August 2020, both the unemployment rate and underemployment rate remained constant, while the labor force participation rate dropped by 1.7 percentage points.

Based on movement records, an average of about 83,900 people (both Macau residents and non-resident workers) worked in Macau while living outside the territory during the reference period. When these individuals are included, the total labor force stood at 470,900, an increase of 4,000 from the previous period.

IC CANCELS UPCOMING PERFORMANCES AMID NEW OUTBREAK

THE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has cancelled various arts and cultural performances, including "The Butterfly Lovers," since the performing groups are unable to visit the region due to the impact of the pandemic.

The "Performance to Celebrate the 72nd Anniversary of the National Day of the People's Republic of China" - Contemporary Acrobatic Show "The Butterfly Lovers," scheduled for October 1, will be cancelled.

OM Young Friends Concert "Classical Express - Rhythm of Tango" by Macao Orchestra scheduled for September 30, and the concert "Chen Sa" Piano Recital, part of the Macao International Music Festival - Music October scheduled for October 3, will also be cancelled.

IC will arrange refunds for those who have purchased tickets for the shows "Pulsating Morphosis" (scheduled for September 25) and "The Butterfly Lovers" from September 29 to November 30.

In addition, the activity "Enigma Box," integrated in the "Show and Deep Cultural Tour in Taipa," originally scheduled for October 1 and the outreach activity "Journey in Musical Corners," integrated in the music festival, originally scheduled for October 2, 3, 9 and 10, will be postponed. **LV**

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CHINA, NATO OFFICIALS DISCUSS AFGHANISTAN, REGIONAL TENSIONS

CHINA'S top diplomat has held a virtual meeting with NATO's chief to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, amid longstanding disagreements between Beijing and the U.S.-led alliance over regional policies.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said yesterday that the discussions had been "positive and constructive". Foreign Minister Wang Yi and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had spoken the previous day, according to the statement, focusing on "issues of common concern."

Chinese officials gave no further details of the talks.

Beijing long opposed the presence of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan — with which it shares a narrow border — while benefiting from the relative stability that presence provided. It has been strongly critical of the shambolic U.S. withdrawal that paved the way for the Taliban sweeping to power, calling it hasty and irresponsible.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi

Beijing said the two officials speaking Monday agreed to "raise the standard of dialogue to advance practical cooperation" between China and NATO on issues including counterterrorism, anti-piracy, cyber security and international peacekeeping.

Stoltenberg told China's foreign minister that the alliance

"went into Afghanistan to ensure the country did not serve again as a platform for terrorists," according to NATO's press release, adding that no attacks against China or alliance members had been organized from the country since 2001.

Stoltenberg also stressed in the meeting the importance of a "coordinated international

approach, including with countries from the region, to hold the Taliban accountable for their commitments on countering terrorism and upholding human rights, not least the rights of women."

China has kept open its embassy in Kabul and maintained dialogue with the Taliban group, including hosting a delegation in July led by top leader Abdul Ghani Baradar.

At that meeting, Wang referred to the Taliban as "a pivotal military and political force in Afghanistan" that is "expected to play an important role in the in process of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction."

Beijing has also called on the Taliban to uphold its pledge to restrain militants seeking independence for the traditionally Muslim northwestern region of Xinjiang. Wang has urged the group to keep border crossings open, while offering \$31 million in humanitarian assistance, along with 3 million doses of Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines.

China has also previously signed deals for oil, gas and copper mining in Afghanistan, although those have long been dormant.

Apart from calls to fight terrorism, China has said virtually nothing about the Taliban's approach to human and women's rights. It has condemned foreign intervention in the country and has shown little enthusiasm for establishing a major economic presence.

While pledging cooperation with NATO, Wang criticized the dispatch of planes and ships from member states to areas near China's borders, saying "the Asia-Pacific region does not need new military groups, nor should it involve a confrontation between great powers, even less a small circle designed to incite a new Cold War."

Stoltenberg said the alliance "does not see China as an adversary, but called on China to uphold its international commitments and act responsibly in the international system," the NATO news release said.


He also raised NATO's concerns over China's "coercive policies, expanding nuclear arsenal and lack of transparency on its military modernisation," the release added. **MDT/AP**

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JAPAN ELECTIONS

Next PM must work quickly on virus, economy, China

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

THE stakes are high as Japanese governing party members vote today for four candidates seeking to replace Yoshihide Suga as prime minister. The next leader must address a pandemic-battered economy, a newly empowered military operating in a dangerous neighborhood, crucial ties with an inward-focused ally, Washington, and tense security standoffs with an emboldened China and its ally North Korea.

For the long-governing Liberal Democratic Party that often chooses its leaders in backroom negotiations, this election promises to be wide open. Because of the party's control of parliament, its leader will become prime minister.

Whoever wins, the party desperately needs new ideas to quickly turn around plunging public support ahead of lower house elections coming within two months, observers say.

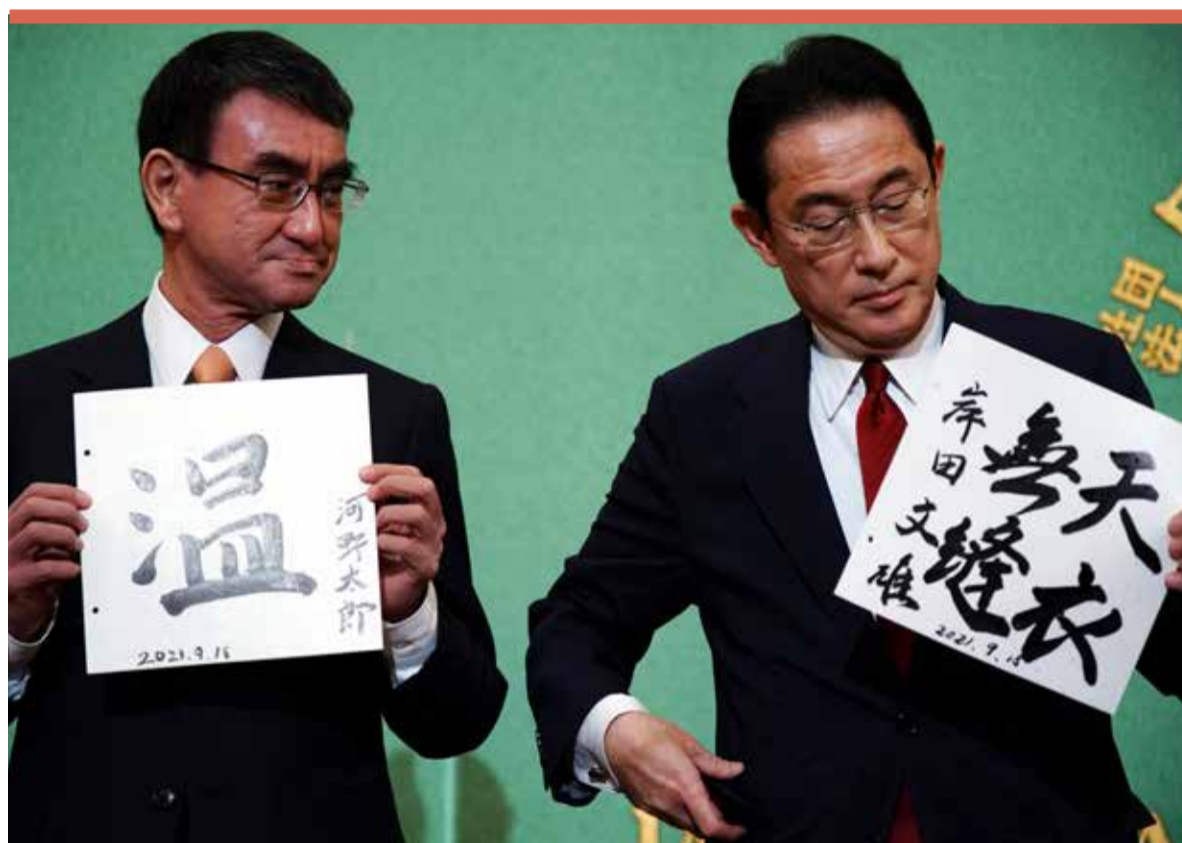
Unusually, two women — conservative Sanae Takaichi and more liberal Seiko Noda — are competing against front-running Taro Kono, the vaccinations minister, and former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

Takaichi, with the crucial backing of Suga's predecessor, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose conservative vision and revisionist stance she supports, has risen fast, while Noda's chances are fading.

Abe's backing of Takaichi may be an attempt to improve the party's sexist image and divert votes from Kono, considered something of a maverick and a reformer, political watchers say.

Little change is expected in key diplomatic and security policies under the new leader, said

AP PHOTO



Taro Kono (left) the cabinet minister in charge of vaccinations, and Fumio Kishida, former foreign minister

Yu Uchiyama, a political science professor at the University of Tokyo.

All of the candidates support close Japan-U.S. security ties and partnerships with other like-minded democracies in Asia and Europe, in part as a way to counter China's growing influence.

Kono and Kishida are former top diplomats. They and Noda have stressed the need for dialogue with China as an important neighbor and trade partner. All four candidates support maintaining close "practical ties" with Taiwan.

At a series of policy debates, the four candidates discussed diplomacy, the economy, energy and defense issues, but also gender equality and sexual diversity, which the male-dominated conservative party has rarely discussed in the past.

sed in the past.

Inclusion of gender and diversity signals that the party knows it cannot keep neglecting the issues, said Ryosuke Nishida, a sociology and public policy professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology.

Takaichi alone opposes changing a law that forces married couples to use only one surname — almost always the husband's. She also has vowed to make official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which honors World War II dead, including war criminals, and is considered by many in China and the Koreas as proof of Japan's lack of remorse over its wartime actions.

The other candidates are likely to refrain from visiting Yasukuni because of the fallout in relations with China and South Korea.

Support for Suga's government nosedived over his handling of

the coronavirus and his insistence on hosting the Tokyo Olympics during the pandemic. Part of his loss of support has also been linked by analysts to the party's sense of complacency and increasingly high-handed approach forged during Abe's long years of leadership.

Wednesday's vote is seen as a test of whether the party can move out of Abe's shadow. His influence in government and party affairs has largely muzzled diverse views and steadily shifted the party to the right, experts say.

"What's at stake is the state of democracy in Japan, and if or how the new leader is willing to listen to the people's voices and take them into political consideration," Uchiyama said. "Prime Minister Suga obviously had a problem with communicating

with the people and did not provide accountability."

Unlike the previous vote, when Suga's selection was largely a done-deal orchestrated by party leaders, the vote on Wednesday is more unpredictable, with most factions allowing free voting by their member lawmakers, a rare move for the party.

Many general voters are watching the party vote, and governing party lawmakers in turn are paying close attention to public opinion in their quest to be re-elected in the upcoming parliamentary election.

The party vote could end an era of unusual political stability — despite corruption scandals and strained security ties with China and the Koreas — and bring a return to Japan's "revolving door" leadership by short-lived prime ministers, starting with Suga.

Suga is leaving only a year after taking office as a pinch hitter for Abe, who suddenly resigned over health problems, ending his nearly eight-year leadership, the longest in Japan's constitutional history.

Support ratings for Suga and his government have slightly recovered since his resignation announcement in early September, when virus infections also started to slow. The number of new daily cases dropped to 2,129 on Sunday, about one-tenth the level in mid-August. Japan has recorded about 1.69 million cases and 17,500 deaths.

Much of the sharp drop in cases is attributed to vaccination progress; about 56% of the country has now been fully vaccinated.

The government is expected to lift a monthslong coronavirus state of emergency on Sept. 30, and people look forward to returning to their daily lives. Opposition parties, meanwhile, have not been able to position themselves as vehicles for viable change.

"Many people tend to react to issues that directly affect their daily lives but pay little attention to political views and issues like national security," Nishida said. "Once the infections slow, virus fears will fade quickly and even the Olympics will be remembered favorably." MDT/AP

American siblings return home after China lifts exit ban

A pair of American siblings have returned home after China lifted an exit ban following Canada's release of a top Chinese tech executive who had been wanted in the U.S. on fraud charges.

The State Department said Cynthia and Victor Liu returned to the U.S. on Sunday after consular staff in Shanghai helped facilitate their departure.

"We welcome Cynthia

and Victor Liu's return to the United States on Sunday," said the department in an undated statement.

A pair of Canadians held in China were also permitted to leave after Canada released Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou on Friday.

According to reports, the Liu siblings had traveled to China along with their mother, Han Tong, in mid-2018 to visit an ailing relative, but were then barred

from leaving the country in an apparent bid to pressure their father Liu Changming, to return to China, where he is wanted on charges of money laundering. Han was detained after arriving in China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying defended the exit bans as legal and necessary to the investigation into their parents' cases.

"Chinese police, in order

to find out the truth, restricted their exit from China," Hua said at a daily briefing yesterday.

"In light of the progress of the investigation, police lifted the restrictions in September 2021 according to law," Hua said. "The handling of the cases is lawful and an independent judicial procedure."

No information was immediately available about any progress in the inves-

tigation or the whereabouts of Han Tong and Liu Changming.

The U.S. State Department's statement said Washington opposes the use of "coercive exit bans against people who are not themselves charged with crimes" and would continue to "advocate on behalf of all American citizens in (China) subject to arbitrary detention and coercive exit bans."

As justification for the exit ban, Hua cited Chinese administration laws which state foreigners can be prevented from leaving if they are "sentenced to criminal punishments, the execution of which are not completed, or suspects or defendants in criminal cases, except those who are sentenced and transferred under relevant agreements between China and foreign countries." MDT/AP



People watch a TV showing a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at the Seoul Railway Station yesterday

North Korea launches missile as diplomat decries US policy

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korea fired a short-range missile into the sea yesterday at nearly the same moment its U.N. diplomat was decriing the U.S.'s "hostile policy" against it, in an apparent return to its pattern of mixing weapons displays with peace overtures to wrest outside concessions.

The launch, its third round of weapons firings this month, came only three days after North Korea repeated its offer for conditional talks with South Korea. Some experts say the latest missile launch was likely meant to test how South Korea would respond as North Korea needs Seoul to persuade Washington to ease economic sanctions and make other concessions.

In an emergency National Security Council meeting, the South Korean government expressed regret over what it called "a short-range missile launch" by the North. South Korea's military earlier said the object fired from North Korea's mountainous northern Janggang province flew toward the waters off the North's eastern coast. Further details of the launch were being analyzed.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific

Command said the launch didn't pose an immediate threat but highlighted "the destabilizing impact of (North Korea's) illicit weapons program." Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said North Korea fired "what could be a ballistic missile" and that his government stepped up its vigilance and surveillance.

A ballistic missile launch would violate a U.N. Security Council ban on North Korean ballistic activities, but the council typically doesn't impose new sanctions on North Korea for launches of short-range weapons.

The launch came after Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, reached out to Seoul twice on Friday and Saturday, saying her country was open to resuming talks and reconciliatory steps if conditions are met. She criticized Seoul for calling Pyongyang's previous missile tests a provocation and demanded it abandon "unfair double-dealing standards" and "hostile policies."

Her overture followed the North's two previous rounds of missile launches this month — the first one with a newly developed cruise missile and the other with a ballistic missile fired from a train, a new launch platform. Those launches

demonstrated North Korea's ability to attack targets in South Korea and Japan, both key U.S. allies where a total of 80,000 American troops are stationed.

The launch "was like testing the South Korean government to see if it would impose a double standard and call it a provocation," said analyst Shin Beomchul with the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy. He said North Korea's status as a nuclear state would be solidified if South Korea and others fail to respond strongly.

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said North Korea may have tested a new missile such as a hypersonic glide vehicle that was among an array of high-tech weapons Kim Jong Un has vowed to procure.

South Korea has called Kim Yo Jong's openness to talks "meaningful" but urged North Korea to restore communication channels before any talks between the rivals can be arranged.

The inter-Korean communication lines have remained largely dormant for about 15 months, so restoring them could be a yardstick to assess how serious the North is about its offer. Seoul's Unification Ministry said yesterday North Korea

remains unresponsive to South Korea's attempts to exchange messages over the channels.

At nearly the same time the launch, North Korean Ambassador Kim Song used his speech on the last day of the U.N. General Assembly's annual high-level meeting to justify his country's development of a "war deterrent" to defend itself against U.S. threats.

"The possible outbreak of a new war on the Korean Peninsula is contained not because of the U.S.'s mercy on the DPRK, it is because our state is growing a reliable deterrent that can control the hostile forces in an attempted military invasion," Kim said. DPRK refers to Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea's official name.

Kim Yo Jong's offer of conditional talks was a response to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's renewed calls for a political declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, leaving the peninsula in a technical state of war.

The three-year conflict pitted South Korea and U.S.-led U.N. forces against North Korea and China and killed 1 million to 2 million people. In his own speech at the U.N. last week, Moon proposed the end-of-the-war declaration be signed among the two Koreas, the U.S. and China.

After the North's launch yesterday, Moon ordered officials to examine its latest weapons firing and previous outreach in a comprehensive manner before formulating countermeasures, according to Moon's office.

A U.S.-led diplomatic effort aimed at convincing North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons in return for economic and political benefits has been stalled 2½ years. U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed hopes for further talks but have also made it clear the long-term sanctions imposed on North Korea will stay in place until the North takes concrete steps toward denuclearization.

While North Korea has tested short-range weapons and vowed to continue building its nuclear arsenal, Kim Jong Un has maintained a moratorium on testing longer-range weapons capable of reaching the American homeland, an indication he wants to keep the chances for future diplomacy with the U.S. alive. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1978 CATHOLICS MOURN POPE'S DEATH



The leader of the Roman Catholic Church has died after the shortest papal reign in history.

Pope John Paul, the surprise candidate elected just 33 days ago, died of a heart attack while reading in bed.

The body of the "smiling pope", who charmed crowds with his easy manner, is lying in state in the Clementine Hall in the Vatican, and a growing throng of mourners are gathering to file past it.

The church's cardinals must now return to Rome to elect a new pope in the secret Sistine Chapel ballot.

Cardinal Albino Luciani was chosen to be Pope on 26 August after one of the shortest voting periods in the Vatican's history.

Despite his brief reign, the Italian son of a socialist stonemason had become very popular with Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

US President Jimmy Carter said Pope John Paul had "captured the imagination of his Church and the world" during his few weeks in office.

Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool Derek Warlock, who was in Rome when he heard the news on the radio, said there was a feeling of great grief for someone people had come to love so much.

"I don't think anyone could believe it - they kept repeating it over and over again - and Rome has been in great shock for the greater part of the day," he told the BBC.

The Church of England Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan, said he hoped the conclave of cardinals would choose a similar man to replace John Paul.

"There was so much about his character that appealed to many of us," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Two weeks later the conclave elected the first Polish pope - Karol Wojtyla, who took the name John Paul II. A whiff of conspiracy hung over the Vatican, and some Catholic groups called for a full investigation into the circumstances of John Paul I's death.

They believed the liberal, working-class pope was poisoned in a plot by the Papal See's traditionalist wing. But no post-mortem was carried out and an investigation was not held.

Allegations of an assassination re-surfaced 20 years later from Cardinal Aloisio Lorscheider - one of the dead Pope's closest allies - but the accusations never became generally accepted.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's an perfect day to smooth over any rough patches, as this pair cultivates gentle, compassionate connections. The sun's firm link with grounded Saturn provides a steady dose of realism and commitment to the mix.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

As a Taurus, you glean cosmic guidance from the jewel of the heavens, lovely Venus. Wednesday's skies find Venus floating off to see with ethereal Neptune.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Fortunately, you're no stranger to duality! On the one hand, creative Venus sweetly aligns with empathic Neptune, bringing a dose of inspired, ethereal energy to utilize on the career front.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Today's cosmic landscape juggles a variety of energies. Bond-building Venus forms a supportive connection with idealistic Neptune, immersing your romantic and creative life in a dreamy, inspired haze.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Use this energy to revisit plans and collaborative commitments. Elsewhere, lover Venus' sweet connection with enchanting Neptune casts a sensitive, romantic haze around intimate bonds.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

At the same time, the illuminating sun forms a supportive link with capable Saturn, helping you make firm future growth on the work front.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Wednesday's skies find magnetic Venus in a supportive alignment with reality-dissolving Neptune, making it easy for you to slip off into an inspired, romantic fog.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Wednesday's skies arrive with a strange blend of energies to indulge in, Scorpio. On the one hand, lover Venus finds herself out to sea with reality-bending Neptune.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

It's an ideal day to apply yourself towards something that requires stamina and follow-through. Artistic Venus aligns with visionary Neptune, imbuing any work you do with an inspired, creative flair.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

It's easy to feel good under Wednesday's cosmic landscape, Capricorn. Your ruling planet, stoic Saturn, receives a warming visit from the path-guiding sun today.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

As an Aquarius, you receive cosmic direction from the self-disciplined planet, Saturn. Wednesday's skies find Saturn receiving an invigorating visit from the illuminating sun.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Let today's skies enchant and ground you. Relationship-oriented Venus spends the day in a magnetic connection with visionary Neptune, beckoning you to slip off into a fantastical dream world around romance.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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9			5					7
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	8		3					2
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	3			2				

HARD

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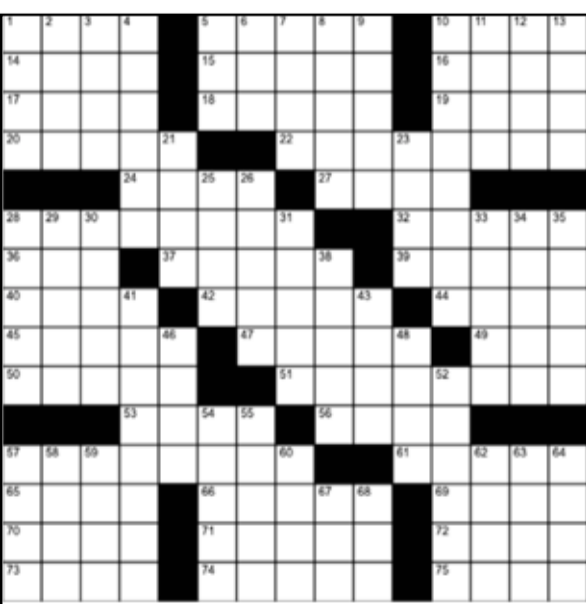
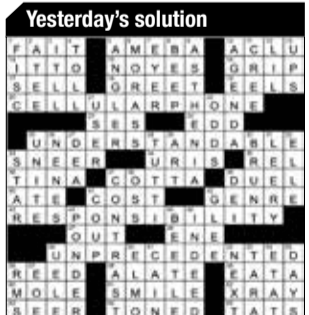
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	17	25	fine
Harbin	11	18	rain
Tianjin	22	30	rain
Urumqi	18	29	fine
Xi'an	20	29	fine
Lhasa	18	24	cloudy
Chengdu	23	36	cloudy
Chongqing	26	35	cloudy
Kunming	27	35	cloudy
Nanjing	18	28	cloudy
Shanghai	24	32	fine
Wuhan	23	34	rain
Hangzhou	9	18	cloudy
Taipei	21	26	thunderstorms
Guangzhou	9	23	fine
Hong Kong	16	26	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	6	12	overcast
Frankfurt	7	16	rain
Paris	7	16	overcast
London	7	15	overcast
New York	12	22	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Blind as ___; 5- Sun, talk; 8- Son of Adam and Eve; 12- Indonesian resort island; 13- State not to "mess with"; 15- Commedia dell'___; 16- Russian pancake; 17- Dress style; 18- Comic Rudner; 19- Angry dispute; 22- Thieves' place; 23- Small island; 24- River to the Ubangi; 26- Wide-mouthed bottle; 29- Sled; 31- Math subj.; 32- Glove material; 34- Called one's bluff; 36- Frat party purchases; 38- Beast of burden; 40- Horse of mixed color; 41- Magna ___; 43- "All My Children" vixen; 45- Female gametes; 46- Joint; 48- Tempestuous; 50- The closest one to us is the sun; 51- Gasteyer of "Saturday Night Live"; 52- Part of UNLV; 54- Recalling; 61- Et ___ (and other men); 63- Polite; 64- Fort ___ captured by U.S. forces in 1814; 65- Underlying cause; 66- Govt. security; 67- Actress Turner; 68- Family member; 69- Asian holiday; 70- Planetary revolution;

DOWN 1- Benny, Björn, Anni-Frid, and Agnetha; 2- Sphere; 3- Settled down; 4- Musical ineptitude; 5- Actress Ward; 6- Off-ramp; 7- Wife of a rajah; 8- Swiss river; 9- Newly married man; 10- Kitchen addition; 11- The Tower of Pisa does this; 13- Diplomatic; 14- Capital of South Korea; 20- Narrow inlets; 21- Require; 25- One with no capacity for veracity; 26- Lucid; 27- Offensive action; 28- Conger catcher; 29- Big rigs; 30- Leaden; 31- Pedigree org.; 33- ___ es Salaam; 35- Genetic letters; 37- Leave in, to an editor; 39- Fit for the stage; 42- Yonder; 44- Super; 47- Construct; 49- Seldom; 52- Pasternak heroine; 53- Baseball family name; 55- Aromatic herb; 56- Bacchanalian cry; 57- Baseball glove; 58- Dies ___; 59- Actress Foch; 60- Stuff; 62- "The Addams Family" cousin;



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
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- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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Ref: 2107 6005 1,707 ft² 4 2 1

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

AD

AP PHOTO



MARKETS

ASIA SHARES MOSTLY FALL ON CHINA ENERGY, EVERGRANDE WORRIES

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

ASIAN shares mostly fell yesterday as concerns about China chipped away at investor optimism following a mixed finish on Wall Street.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 0.3% to 30,139.65. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 1% to 7,314.10. South Korea's KOSPI declined 0.8% to 3,109.07. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 1.7% to 24,619.28. The Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.3% to 3,594.18.

A power crunch in some parts of China has shut down fac-

tories and left some households without electricity under an effort to meet official energy use targets. That could have global repercussions, including on supplies needed for manufacturing throughout Asia, coming right ahead of the year-end shopping season.

The woes come on top of parts and raw material shortages that already ail regional manufacturing because of supply disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Analysts say the power shortage in China could become prolonged as the demand for coal and natural gas surges during the winter.

Another lingering market worry resonating from China is the possible collapse of one of China's biggest real estate developers, Evergrande Group, which is struggling to avoid a default on billions of dollars of debt.

"Crucially, contagion risks loom large due to transmission within the property sector due to similar risks to home-buyers and banks via balance sheet exposures," said Vishnu Varathan of the Asia & Oceania Treasury Department at Mizuho Bank. "Fact is Evergrande is at best a risk that has temporarily abated but is far from abolished."

The vote for the leader of Ja-

pan's ruling party, set for today, was also weighing on Tokyo trading, according to analysts, as players took a wait-and-see attitude. Four candidates are in the race to replace Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who is stepping down after a year in office. No major economic or foreign policy changes are expected, as the pro-U.S. Liberal Democratic Party has ruled Japan almost continually in recent decades.

Wall Street's major stock indexes ended mixed as losses by technology and health care companies outweighed gains elsewhere in the market.

The S&P 500 fell 0.3% to

4,443.11, ending a three-day winning streak for the benchmark index, which last week notched its first weekly gain in three weeks. The Nasdaq dropped 0.5% to 14,969.97, while the Dow managed a 0.2% gain to 34,869.37. The Russell 2000 picked up 1.5% to 2,281, a sign that investors are still confident about future economic growth.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury was steady at 1.49%. It was at 1.31% a week ago, as market jitters drove investors to shift money into bonds, which lowers their yield. It has been climbing for the past week.

The yield influences interest rates on mortgages and other consumer loans, so when it rises it allows lenders to charge higher rates. Bank of America gained 2.7%.

U.S. markets have had a choppy month so far and the S&P 500 is on pace to shed 1.8% in September, which would mark the first monthly loss since January. Investors have been trying to gauge just how much room the economy has to grow amid waves of COVID-19 crimping consumer spending and job growth while inflation remains a concern.

Consumer spending has been the key driver for the economic recovery and it has been crimped in part by rising cases of COVID-19 because of the highly contagious delta variant, which remains a huge concern in Asia.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude added 25 cents to \$75.70 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It gained \$1.47 to \$75.45 per barrel on Monday.

Brent crude, the international standard, rose 21 cents to \$79.74 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar rose to 111.16 Japanese yen from 110.99 yen. The euro cost \$1.1695, inching down from \$1.1700. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands Resorts participates in Macao Week in Sichuan



Sands Resorts Macao participated in the "Macao Week in Sichuan-Chengdu" from Sept. 23 to 27, introducing The Londoner Macao to local residents enthusiastic to learn more about the British-themed integrated resort.

The mega roadshow highlights Macao's tourism, trade and commerce, culture, sports, entertainment and other attractions through an array of themed stands, among which The Londoner Macao's

booth is particularly "eye-catching," according to a statement.

Incorporating classic London elements such as Big Ben, red telephone boxes and black taxis, it has attracted high numbers of visitors. A large LED screen allows visitors to explore a variety of new ways to dine, stay, shop and entertain at the property.

The roadshow is presented special travel offers valued at over RMB 110 million for Chengdu residents. As one of the highlights, Sands Resorts Macao's limited-time hotel packages offer discounts of up to 30% on accommodation, dining, shopping and entertainment options.

JW Marriott, The Ritz-Carlton present oceanic feasts



JW Marriott Hotel Macau's Urban Kitchen and Man Ho Chinese Restaurant, and The Ritz-Carlton, Macau's Michelin-starred Lai Heen are presenting a series of culinary specials

to celebrate National Day.

Enjoy dinner and a show during Golden Week at Urban Kitchen with live seafood cutting every night between October 1 to 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Tuna is the star of the show between October 1 to 3, where a beautiful 25kg whole Yellowtail Tuna will be expertly cut in front of diners.

Meanwhile, hand-selected fresh abalone from Dalian is curated for a range of abalone delicacies to welcome the new season at Man Ho Chinese Restaurant, available from now until January 1, 2022.

Guests can also enjoy a luxurious seafood-forward Chinese dinner at Lai Heen with signature dishes like Chilled Sliced Abalone with Caviar, Double-boiled French Francolin with Fish Maw and Sea Horse, and Sautéed Fresh Hokkaido Scallop with Air-dried Mantis Shrimp in X.O. Sauce among others.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

RUGBY

Springboks forced to change two for second meeting with NZ

SOUTH Africa made two injury-enforced changes to its 23 for a second meeting with New Zealand in the Rugby Championship as coach Jacques Nienaber indicated the Springboks would continue with their highly criticized style of play that's based on set-piece dominance and tactical kicking.

That style was the Boks' "DNA," Nienaber said.

The changes to the team announced yesterday were because tighthead prop Frans Malherbe and replacement loose forward Marco van Staden were out with injury.

Ox Nché is in for Malherbe, although Nché will start on the loosehead against the All Blacks on the Gold Coast on Saturday, and Trevor Nyakane switches to tighthead. Jasper Wiese was recalled to replace Van Staden on the bench.

Wing Cheslin Kolbe was in line to make his return from a

AP PHOTO



South Africa's Siya Kolisi

leg injury that ruled him out of South Africa's two losses against Australia and the defeat to New Zealand last weekend, but the in-

jury flared up again at yesterday's training session, Nienaber said.

Nienaber said he opted for continuity after coming close to

beating the All Blacks, who won 19-17 last Saturday with a late penalty by fullback Jordie Barrett. That sealed the Rugby Cham-

pionship title for New Zealand ahead of the last round of games.

"We made a big step up in terms of our performance last week and having reviewed the match, there is no doubt we delivered a performance worthy of a victory," Nienaber said.

But the world champion Springboks are facing four straight defeats to finish the Rugby Championship.

"We know it is going to take a colossal 80-minute effort, but the drive to succeed and motivation to win this weekend is as big as it gets," Nienaber said. "Last week we stuck to our DNA and style of play and with a little more luck we could have come away with the result, so we need to ensure that we are better at it this week." MDT/AP

LINEUP

SOUTH AFRICA: Willie le Roux, Sbu Nkosi, Lukhanyo Am, Damian de Allende, Makazole Mapimpi, Handré Pollard, Faf de Klerk; Duane Vermeulen, Kwagga Smith, Siya Kolisi (captain), Lood de Jager, Eben Etzebeth, Trevor Nyakane, Bongsi Mbonambi, Ox Nché. Reserves: Malcolm Marx, Steven Kitshoff, Vincent Koch, Franco Mostert, Jasper Wiese, Herschel Jantjies, Elton Jantjies, Frans Steyn.

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OPINION

World Views

David Klepper, MDT/AP

'THE BIG DELETE:' INSIDE FACEBOOK'S CRACKDOWN IN GERMANY

Days before Germany's federal elections, Facebook took what it called an unprecedented step: the removal of a series of accounts that worked together to spread COVID-19 misinformation and encourage violent responses to COVID restrictions.

The crackdown, announced Sept. 16, was the first use of Facebook's new "coordinated social harm" policy aimed at stopping not state-sponsored disinformation campaigns but otherwise typical users who have mounted an increasingly sophisticated effort to sidestep rules on hate speech or misinformation.

In the case of the German network, the nearly 150 accounts, pages and groups were linked to the so-called Querdenken movement, a loose coalition that has protested lockdown measures in Germany and includes vaccine and mask opponents, conspiracy theorists and some far-right extremists.

Facebook touted the move as an innovative response to potentially harmful content; far-right commenters condemned it as censorship. But a review of the content that was removed — as well as the many more Querdenken posts that are still available — reveals Facebook's action to be modest at best. At worst, critics say, it could have been a ploy to counter complaints that it doesn't do enough to stop harmful content.

Facebook regularly updates journalists about accounts it removes under policies banning "coordinated inauthentic behavior," a term it created in 2018 to describe groups or people who work together to mislead others. Since then, it has removed thousands of accounts, mostly what it said were bad actors attempting to interfere in elections and politics in countries around the world.

But there were constraints, since not all harmful behavior on Facebook is "inauthentic"; there are plenty of perfectly authentic groups using social media to incite violence, spread misinformation and hate. So the company was limited by its policy on what it could take down.

But even with the new rule, a problem remains with the takedowns: they don't make it clear what harmful material remains up on Facebook, making it difficult to determine just what the social network is accomplishing.

Case in point: the Querdenken network. Reset had already been monitoring the accounts removed by Facebook and issued a report that concluded only a small portion of content relating to Querdenken was taken down while many similar posts were allowed to stay up.

The dangers of COVID-19 extremism were underscored days after Facebook's announcement when a young German gas station worker was fatally shot by a man who had refused to wear a mask. The suspect followed several far-right users on Twitter and had expressed negative views about immigrants and the government.

Reset's analysis of comments removed by Facebook found that many were actually written by people trying to rebut Querdenken arguments, and did not include misinformation.

Facebook defended its action, saying the account removals were never meant to be a blanket ban of Querdenken, but instead a carefully measured response to users who were working together to violate its rules and spread harmful content.

Facebook plans to refine and expand its use of the new policy going forward, according to David Agranovich, Facebook's director of global threat disruption.

"This is a start," he told The AP on Monday. "This is us extending our network disruptions model to address new and emerging threats."

While the removal of the Querdenken network may have been justified, it should raise questions about Facebook's role in democratic debates, said Simon Hegelich, a political scientist at the Technical University of Munich.

Hegelich said Facebook appears to be using Germany as a "test case" for the new policy.

"Facebook is really intervening in German politics," Hegelich said. "The COVID situation is one of the biggest issues in the election. They're probably right that there's a lot of misinformation on these sites, but nevertheless it's a highly political issue, and Facebook is intervening in it."

Members of the Querdenken movement reacted angrily to Facebook's decision, but many also expressed a lack of surprise.

"The big delete continues," one supporter posted in a still-active Querdenken Facebook group, "See you on the street."

[Abridged]

The Daily Stormer website advocates for the purity of the white race, posts hate-filled, conspiratorial screeds against Blacks, Jews and women and has helped inspire at least three racially motivated murders. It has also made its founder, Andrew Anglin, a millionaire.

Anglin has tapped a worldwide network of supporters to take in at least 112 Bitcoin since January 2017 — worth \$4.8 million at today's exchange rate — according to data shared with The Associated Press. He's likely raised even more.

Anglin is just one very public example of how radical right provocateurs are raising significant amounts of money from around the world through cryptocurrencies. Banned by traditional finan-

cial institutions, they have taken refuge in digital currencies, which they are using in ever more secretive ways to avoid the oversight of banks, regulators and courts, finds an AP analysis of legal documents, Telegram channels and blockchain data from Chainalysis, a cryptocurrency analytics firm.

Anglin owes more than \$18 million in legal judgments in the United States. While online, he remains visible — most days, dozens of stories on the Daily Stormer homepage carry his name — in the real world, Anglin's a ghost.

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JOHN HINCKLEY, WHO SHOT REAGAN, TO BE FREED FROM OVERSIGHT

BEN FINLEY

A federal judge said Monday that John Hinckley Jr., who tried to assassinate President Ronald Reagan four decades ago, can be freed from all remaining restrictions next year if he continues to follow those rules and remains mentally stable.

U.S. District Court Judge Paul L. Friedman in Washington said during a 90-minute court hearing that he'll issue his ruling on the plan this week.

Since Hinckley moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, from a Washington hospital in 2016, court-imposed restrictions have required doctors and therapists to oversee his psychiatric medication and therapy. Hinckley has been barred from having a gun. And he can't contact Reagan's children, other victims or their families, or actress Jodie Foster, who he was obsessed with at the time of the 1981 shooting.

Friedman said Hinckley, now 66, has displayed no symptoms of active mental illness, no violent behavior and no interest in weapons since 1983.

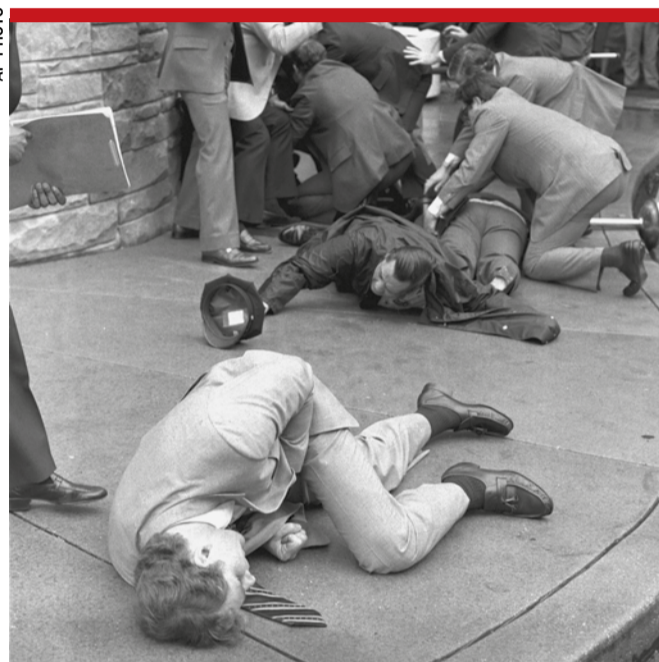
"If he hadn't tried to kill the president, he would have been unconditionally released a long, long, long time ago," the judge said. "But everybody is comfortable now after all of the studies, all of the analysis and all of the interviews and all of the experience with Mr. Hinckley."

Friedman said the plan is to release Hinckley from all court supervision in June.

A 2020 violence risk assessment conducted on behalf of Washington's Department of Behavioral Health concluded that Hinckley would not pose a danger if he's unconditionally released.

The U.S. government had previously opposed ending restrictions.

He recently moved out his mother's house, which sits along a golf course



In this March 30, 1981, file photo, a street outside a Washington hotel after shots were fired at U.S. President Ronald Reagan

in a gated community in Williamsburg. She died in July. Attorneys did not say where Hinckley is currently living.

"Mr. Hinckley does have a history of turning inward, and toward isolation," Weston said.

Another concern is the impending retirement of one of Hinckley's therapists and the looming end to a therapy group, which has provided much support and social interaction. Weston said Hinckley will likely face challenges finding a similar group in the future.

"All we have to do is wait a few more months and see," Weston said. "And we'll have actual hard data. We'll have information in real time to see how Mr. Hinckley adapts."

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute said in a statement that it was "saddened" by the court's plan.

"Contrary to the judge's decision, we believe John Hinckley is still a threat to others and we strongly oppose his release," the foundation said. "Our hope is that the Justice Department will file a motion with the court leading to a reversal of this decision."

Hinckley was 25 when he shot and wounded the 40th U.S. president outsi-

de a Washington hotel. The shooting paralyzed Reagan press secretary James Brady, who died in 2014. It also injured Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and Washington police officer Thomas Delahanty.

Hinckley did not attend yesterday's hearing. But Barry Levine, his attorney, said Hinckley wanted to express his "heartfelt" apologies and "profound regret" to the people he shot and their families as well as to Foster and the American people.

"Perhaps it is too much to ask for forgiveness," Levine said. "But we hope they have an understanding that the acts that caused him to do this terrible thing (were caused by) mental illness."

In recent years, Hinckley has sold items from a booth at an antique mall that he's found at estate sales, flea markets and consignment shops. He's also shared his music on YouTube.

"I would hope that people will see this as a victory for mental health," Levine, Hinckley's attorney, said Monday. "That is the real message in this case — that people who have been ravaged by mental disease, with good support and access to treatment, can actually become productive members of society."

Afghanistan The Taliban banned barbershops in a southern Afghanistan province from shaving or trimming beards, claiming their edict is in line with Shariah, or Islamic, law. The order in Helmand province was issued Monday by the provincial Taliban government's vice and virtue department to barbers in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital.



France and Greece yesterday announced a defense deal worth around 3 billion euros, including Athens' decision to buy three French warships as part of a strategy to boost its defense capacities in the Eastern Mediterranean amid recurring tensions with longtime foe Turkey. President Emmanuel Macron and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced a defense and security strategic partnership in a joint news conference in Paris.

Congo A panel commissioned by the World Health Organization has identified more than 80 alleged cases of sex abuse during the U.N. health agency's response to an Ebola outbreak in Congo, including allegations implicating 20 WHO staff members. The panel released its findings yesterday, months after an Associated Press investigation found senior WHO management was informed of multiple abuse claims in 2019 but failed to stop the harassment and even promoted one of the managers involved.

Sports Roger Hunt, a striker in the only England team to win the World Cup and one of Liverpool's most prolific scorers, has died. He was 83. Liverpool, where Hunt spent most of his playing career, said he died yesterday [Macau time] after a long illness. Hunt scored 285 goals in 492 appearances, making him Liverpool's second-highest goalscorer of all time. He won the league with Liverpool in 1964 and 1966 — the same year he won the World Cup.