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Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

THE MACAU UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO RUN THE COUNTRY'S FIRST EXTERNAL NATIONAL-LEVEL FIELD SCIENCE OBSERVATION STATION

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ALMOST OVERNIGHT, JAPAN HAS BECOME A STUNNING, AND SOMEWHAT MYSTERIOUS, CORONAVIRUS SUCCESS STORY

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AP PHOTO



China said yesterday its launch of a new spacecraft was merely a test to see whether the vehicle could be re-used. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the launch involved a spacecraft rather than a missile and was of "great significance for reducing the use-cost of spacecraft and could provide a convenient and affordable way to make a round trip for mankind's peaceful use of space."

AP PHOTO



Taiwan The company that manufactures smartphones for Apple Inc. and other global brands announced plans yesterday to produce electric cars for auto brands under a similar contract model. Foxconn Technology Group will produce cars and buses for brands in China, North America, Europe and other markets, said its chairman, Young Liu. He said the clients can modify their appearance and features for their markets.

AP PHOTO



Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida called for increases in Japan's military capability and spending in response to what he described as growing threats from China and North Korea in a public debate with eight other political party leaders ahead of upcoming national elections. The party leaders also discussed ways to mend the pandemic-hit economy and respond to any future waves of the coronavirus.

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THE CONVERSATION

ARTHUR POULIN



WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR LIFE STORIES IF YOU DELETE YOUR FACEBOOK ACCOUNT?

MICHAEL HUMPHREY,
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

IF the latest deluge of Facebook controversies has you ready to kick the app to the digital curb, you are not alone. There are plenty of good guides out there on how to do it right. Even Facebook makes it pretty easy to understand the nuances of saying “see ya later” (deactivating) or “never speak to me again” (deleting).

But before you go, you might want to consider this: What happens to your life stories?

For many people, a decade or more of updates, comments, photos, messages, tags, pokes, groups and reactions reside inside that particular digital sphere. And Facebook wants you to remember that. As one writer put it: “Facebook is obsessed with memories. It likes to make you nostalgic, and remind you of just how long you’ve used social media.”

As a researcher who studies life stories on social media,

I know that’s an accurate assessment. This strategy drove Facebook to build a powerful and unique life narrative tool. Millions of people have invested billions of collective hours building what scholars call a networked life narrative, in which people “co-construct” their social identities through their interactions with one another.

Perhaps you’ve never thought about how archiving the small moments of your life would eventually amass into a large narrative of yourself. Or how interactions from your family, friends, colleagues and strangers would create meaningful dimensions of that story.

DEACTIVATING VERSUS DELETING

What happens if you decide to be done with all of that? If you deactivate Facebook, it is like putting that story into suspended animation. Much of what you did and said will ei-

ther be removed or grayed out. If you reactivate it someday, most of it will be restored and on you go.

Delete the account, on the other hand, and “Your profile, photos, posts, videos, and everything else you’ve added will be permanently deleted. You won’t be able to retrieve anything you’ve added,” according to Facebook.

If all those memories you have stored mean anything to you, your last chance to keep it before deleting is to download your information. I suggest you do this once in a while anyway, because it reveals a lot about how you are tracked, how you consume media on the app and how you have acted on the site over the years.

It’s also a pretty nifty set of files that you can view offline either through the folder system or using a web browser offline by opening the index.html file. You can also look at the data online through Facebook.

LOSING THE CONNECTIONS

But to a surprisingly large degree, your downloaded narrative gets “de-networked.” What do I mean by that?

- Your posts are listed by date and time, but have none of the reactions and comments that followed. This is also true of photos and videos you have posted.

- The same happens to the comments you made on other people’s posts. There is no reference to what you were commenting on because technically that is not your data.

- The polls you have voted on do not have the context of the poll itself, only your answers.

- The invitations you received are listed only by name.

- There is a section of all the people you have interacted with on the app, but it’s just a list of names, dates and times.

- There are dates attached to most everything, but none of the context – think personal and social news – in which

those posts were made.

There are exceptions. For one, your messages are left in context, so you see the conversations you had. Another exception is that events are ordered by how you responded about attending. And I have one caveat: I am gathering this information from my own data, so there might be other exceptions I cannot see.

Take a look around before walking out the door

Still, what you ultimately download starts to feel like the scaffolding of a life, with the depth of those memories only activated by your own mind. That might be enough for you.

If the richness of your networked narrative means something, on the other hand, slow down. Take some time to dive into your account one last time – saving the responses you cherish, capturing the context where you can – before you say goodbye to Facebook for good.

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

Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com

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RENATO MARQUES

THE Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center announced yesterday that a 24 hour period ending at noon today will be crucial for the implementation of the announced easing of border crossing restrictions between Macau and Zhuhai.

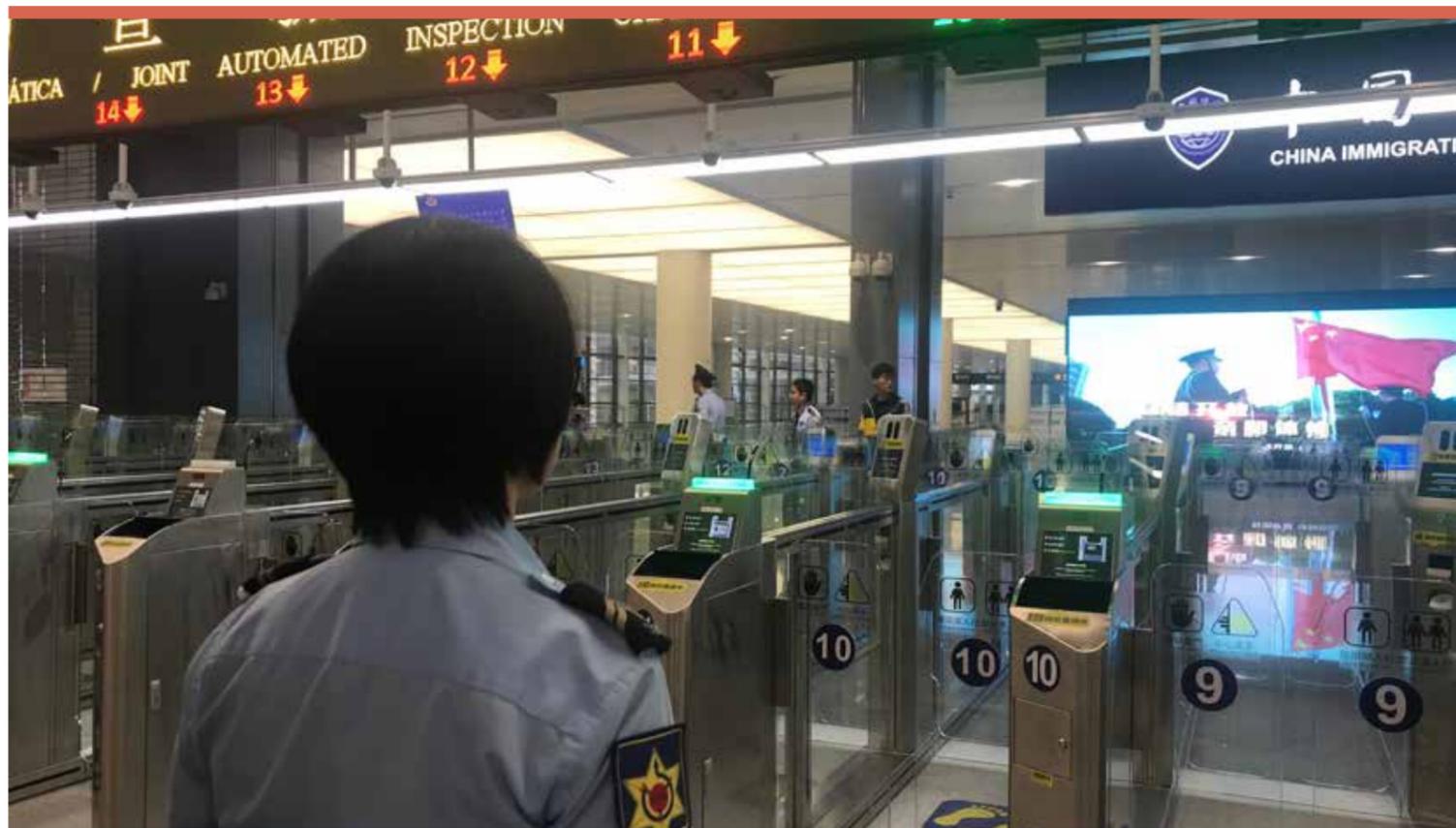
This measure's implementation depends on the results of the ongoing nucleic acid tests (NAT) being undertaken by people that wish to cross the border. Restrictions will not ease unless all turn out to be negative, Dr. Tai Wa Hou, medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center said in response to a media question.

"Today [Monday] is a decisive day for the border reopening. People are now doing NAT and only 100% negative results would allow the measures announced earlier by Zhuhai authorities to take effect at noon-time [Tuesday]," Tai remarked.

Earlier in the same press conference, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, Coordinator of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, had already mentioned that if any of the NAT results turn out positive, "the border will not reopen tomorrow [Tuesday] noon." She added that this was the condition imposed by Zhuhai authorities.

Leong also explained that, following negotiations with Mainland authorities, there are three groups of people that will still be ineligible for a quarantine exemption on the border crossing into Zhuhai.

Border-crossing restrictions to ease if no more cases by noon



She explained that among these three groups are people considered of high risk such as "people that have had direct contact with people arriving in Macau from high or medium risk areas, people that work on the handling of non-disinfected shipped goods, airline staff that might be in contact with people coming from high or me-

diu risk areas, such as cabin crew and also those that work in the quarantine hotels or other venues or those that work in medical services related to the treatment of patients infected with Covid-19."

Under the new rules from noon today, travelers crossing the border Macau-Zhuhai will be exempted from quarantine,

needing only to present a certificate of a negative NAT taken within 48 hours.

NO VACCINATION NEEDED

Unlike previous occasions, Zhuhai authorities did not request that travelers provide proof that they had received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

In response to several questions on the topic at the regular health press briefing, Tai explained that the conditions imposed now are different from the previous occasion, noting that, unlike this time, border crossing was allowed before a 14 day period without cases detected had elapsed.

Tai added that negotiations are still ongoing in an attempt to grant further advantages to those that are vaccinated, such as an extended validity period of the NAT beyond the 48 hours is now required from everyone.

However, Tai did not want to confirm whether the proposal

is to extend this validity back to the original seven days for vaccinated travelers.

Further questioned on the topic, Tai tried to refute the idea that the previous requirement for a certificate of inoculation with at least one dose of the vaccine was a joint effort among authorities from both sides to push some people, namely cross-border non-resident workers, to get vaccinated.

For Tai, different measures are justified in different situations, and adjustments are made taking into account the situation on the ground at any given time.

Tai also cleared the local side of any responsibility for the decision, stating that it was a unilateral requirement from Zhuhai authorities.

"This is a Zhuhai city measure aiming to ensure the safety of the people of Zhuhai so that Macau people do not bring the virus from Macau into Zhuhai," the official said.

NOT YET THE RIGHT TIME FOR SCHOOLS TO REOPEN

MACAU has not yet reached a level of safety that would prompt the government to reopen schools and other educational facilities, Wong Ka Ki, head of the Department of Non-tertiary Education in the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), said at yesterday's regular health press briefing.

The government has announced the reopening from tomorrow of a large number of facilities and venues that had been ordered to close, such as entertainment venues, health and beauty centers as well as sports venues.

Wong said that schools reopening is still undergoing analysis and negotiation.

According to the DSEDJ official, there is not yet a consensus among the different stakeholders for the resumption of in-person classes, so the bureau is for the time being focused on supporting online classes and activities.

During the same press briefing, the Coordinator of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, elaborated on the topic, stating that the authorities will also consider the reopening of other types of venues such as outdoor playgrounds, barbecue areas, and other leisure venues" in a phased manner and according to a risk evaluation." She added that such openings would still be conditional on

restrictions such as limits on the number of people in a venue, social distancing and temperature checking.

GOV'T GUIDELINES ARE A MINIMUM STANDARD

Leong was also questioned on the topic of policies in society at large which are stricter than those imposed by the health authorities, such as mandatory vaccination to enter a venue, participate in an event or simply fulfill work duties. She responded that the guidelines from the health authorities are not too strict and that different public and private entities are welcome to enforce measures which exceed the safety level of those imposed by health authorities.

"Different entities and services might decide, according to their needs, [to have] stricter Covid-19 measures than the guidelines issued by the Health Bureau (SSM). We have no problem with such decisions and we welcome them," Leong said.

Leong was questioned on the tension between these measures and statements by the local government that vaccination is a voluntary procedure and no one can be forced to do it against their will and asked about what would happen if a person is barred from taking an oath for not being vaccinated. Leong's only reply was that the SSM has no authority to decide on such cases. **RM**

BIG-SIX HELP HSI UPTREND

HONG KONG shares closed higher yesterday, extending a broad uptrend so far this month despite disappointing Chinese third quarter GDP growth data. The benchmark Hang Seng Index (HSI) rose 0.3% to settle at 25,409.75. Chinese sportswear makers led the gains. Anta rose 4.4% and Li Ning added 2.8%, as analysts expect a fourth quarter sales

rebound driven by demand ahead of the Winter Olympics in China. Macau casino operators lent further support, with Wynn Macau (+4.2%), Sands China (+3.6%) and Galaxy Entertainment (+3.4%) leading the pack. The hike of the big-six stocks was attributed to the announcement of the Zhuhai border normalization, ending a three-week-long de facto border closure.

CARGO SHIP BEACHED IN TAIPA WATERWAY REPAIRED

A cargo ship that berthed west of the Taipa waterway right before Typhoon Kompasu has been repaired, the Marine and Water Bureau announced. The 50-meter-long cement-carrying vessel experienced flooding due to heavy wind and waves when it was passing west of the Taipa Ferry Terminal last Tuesday morning. The vessel beached urgently to avoid sinking, and no crew members were injured. After the tropical storm subsided, the authorities assisted the ship to leave MSAR's maritime zone for maintenance on the Mainland. The government said there was no impact to vessels nearby.

TRAVEL PERMIT RENEWAL MORE CONVENIENT FOR MACAU, HK RESIDENTS ON MAINLAND

Chinese public security authorities have recently renewed or replaced 75,000 Mainland travel permits for Hong Kong and Macau residents who study, work or live on the Mainland, the National Immigration Administration said. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, those residents could only apply for a Mainland travel permit in the two special administrative regions. To guard against the risk of cross-border infections, and for the convenience of people needing to travel, the immigration administration departments of Mainland public security agencies have been authorized to process the renewal and replacement of Mainland travel permits for Hong Kong and Macau residents since October 10, 2020.

IC'S ONLINE BOOK SHOP UNAVAILABLE FOR MAINTENANCE

The Online Book Shop will undergo regular website maintenance from October 20 to 22, with service suspended during this period. To promote reading, the Online Book Shop of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) makes available a wide variety of books and periodicals on its platform, allowing local or overseas readers to select and purchase the IC's publications with ease. The IC offers over 300 books and periodicals in the Online Book Shop, including publications in traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Portuguese and English. A rich and diverse range of genres are available, including history, literature, visual arts, performing arts, culture and academic research.

CRIME REPORT

UNLICENSED WOMAN APPREHENDED FOR ADMINISTERING BEAUTY SURGERY

ANTHONY LAM

A woman has been arrested by the Judiciary Police (PJ) for performing beauty treatments and surgery without a license, the authority announced at yesterday's regular press briefing.

The suspect, a 38-year-old woman from Vietnam overstaying her visa, surnamed Nguyen, was reported anonymously on August 29 by an individual who saw video clips on Douyin, the mainland Chinese parent app of TikTok, and Facebook, of her practicing such services, including administering injections and blepharoplasty (double eyelid surgery).

From the video clips, the PJ managed to confirm the identity and residential address of the suspect. They also obtained confirmation from the Health Bureau (SSM) that the woman in the video clips was not licensed to offer medical services in Macau.

On October 15, the PJ deployed inspectors to the residential address of the suspect for investigation. The investigation also involved the judicial branch and the SSM.

The suspect was intercepted

during the investigation. A large amount of medicine and plastic surgery tools were found at her address.

Preliminary statements revealed that the suspect came to Macau to work as a domestic helper in March 2020. Her contract was not renewed by her then employer. At the time, she was also involved in forgery of a document.

In fear of being deported to Vietnam, she started hiding in the apartment on Avenida de Horte e Costa and began her "career" to support her life in the city.

The monthly rent for the apartment was MOP7,500.

According to her statement, she learned plastic surgery skills in South Korea. She confessed that she had been performing beauty injections and surgery in the apartment. The tools and medicines were brought into Macau from Vietnam.

She also confessed to marketing her business on the two aforementioned social media platforms. However, no record of her clients was kept.

Prices for the services provided ranged from several tens of patacas to slightly more than a hundred. Money collected so far

has been spent on daily necessities, the suspect told the police.

For the time being, the police believe she has had about 50 clients, although no client record has been found.

The PJ emphasized that the investigation is still ongoing and the SSM will take part in the investigation as well.

The PJ reminds residents to be aware of unlicensed plastic surgery or medical beauty services and says the public should report any suspicious operators to the authority.

SMUGGLED-IN DAD HOUSED BY HIS TNR SON

A father who entered Macau illegally and the son he stayed with have both been apprehended by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) for separate crimes, the police force announced yesterday.

Three months ago, the father arrived in Macau through illicit channels out of the desire to gamble. However, he was not admitted by any casino because he could not obtain a valid health code.

Surnamed Yu, the 53-year-old father entered Macau from the Mainland on a boat opera-

ted by smugglers, at the cost of RMB10,000. Without any legal ability to rent hotel accommodation, he decided to stay at his son's place.

His son works in Macau as a construction worker. He does not have a driving license but managed to get a motorbike.

At 9 a.m. on October 14, the father rode his son's bike around the city on a joyride. On Estrada da Areia Preta, he changed lanes by crossing a double white line, which is against the law.

Nearby PSP officers saw the breach and intercepted the father, who has no driving license nor any other identity document. He was therefore taken to the police station, where he admitted to entering illegally.

The police also found a record of him entering Macau illegally in 2011.

Apart from accommodating an overstaying individual, the son was discovered to have produced fraudulent personal information to the police in 2017 during the investigation of an unlicensed driving case.

He confessed to the police that his friend told him to do so in order to avoid being tracked by the authority.



Sinopharm vaccine rolling out for youngsters

RENATO MARQUES

THE Sinopharm inactivated virus vaccine has been officially authorized for 12-to-18-year-olds, the government announced yesterday.

According to health authorities, the decision was finally made after evaluation of scientific evidence gathered by the Mainland authorities. This data, according to local vaccination program coordinator, Dr. Tai Wa Hou, "has proven the safety of the inoculation with the vaccine in this [12-to-18-year-old] population," he said during yesterday's Covid-19 press briefing.

According to Tai, the order from the Chief Executive published yesterday authorizes the vaccine immediately for everyone between 12 and 60 years old, as well as people older than 60 in a condition to allow inoculation.

The measure is effective immediately, so interested parties can choose the Sinopharm vaccine for youngsters as early as today, the same official said.



He added that when the outreach vaccination program aimed at schools resumes, those who have made bookings for an mRNA vaccine (the only choice that was available at the time) will also be able to exercise choice and change the vaccine type if they prefer.

Tai also announced that

new lots of both Sinopharm and BioNTech mRNA vaccines arrived in Macau last Friday, a new vaccine shipment that includes 300,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine and some 90,000 doses from BioNTech. The shipment arrives to support an expected growth in interest for vaccination in the

coming weeks and months.

Tai also announced a new outreach program, among other upcoming measures, to increase vaccination rates in certain groups. The program is being negotiated with the Social Welfare Bureau to vaccinate elderly people who live in or frequent care homes in Macau.

MUST to run China's first external National Field Science Station

THE Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has obtained national approval to run the country's first external national-level field science observation station, the university announced in a statement.

The Ministry of Science and Technology announced a batch of 69 National Field Science Observation and Research Stations on October 11. Among them is a facility to be operated by MUST that focuses on Macau's coastal ecology.

According to MUST, the facility will be the first and only such station operated by a non-Mainland entity.

The university noted that the establishment of the Macau station will fill the gap in China's data on sub-tropical Chinese coasts.

It added that this type of station, alongside national laboratories and national key laboratories, are part and parcel of China's innovation system.

Through the establishment of the Macau Field Station, MUST will cooperate with Tsinghua University, Peking University, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, Guangdong University of Technology, Sun Yat-sen University, Jinan University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the Chinese University of Hong Kong in related fields in the future. Closer cooperation in scientific observation, joint research and personnel training will greatly enhance the research capabilities of MUST in related fields. **AL**

EDUCATION BUREAU ISSUES SQUID GAME WARNING

A drama series which has recently become popular around the world involves a "multitude of bloody and horrifying elements, which are not suitable for younger audiences," the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) warned in a statement.

The bureau is referring to "Squid Game", a Korean drama series available on the streaming platform Netflix.

In the statement, the DSEDJ describes the series as containing "violence, bloodshed, horror and distorted values."

It added that the violent and bloody scenes would leave psychological impacts on

younger viewers. Worse, they may seek to imitate the violence portrayed in the drama series.

"The distorted values will grow deep roots in their minds," the authority cautioned.

The bureau reminds parents and guardians to provide assistance where necessary to younger generations when picking which programs to watch. "Younger viewers should avoid watching shows that depict violence or pornography," the DSEDJ added.

Younger viewers who are psychologically affected by the show can contact the DSEDJ at 2840-1010 for support. **AL**



PROSPERITY INDEX ESTIMATED TO RISE IN Q4

ALTHOUGH remaining below mid-range, the Prosperity Indices for the last three months of the year are expected to rise slightly, the Macau Economic Association announced in a statement.

The association estimates that the Prosperity Index will rise from 2.8 points in October to 3.2 points in December. The index is a nine-point scale, with zero points being the lowest and eight

points the highest.

To explain this estimate, the association noted that, globally speaking, the advantages underlying the tourism and leisure, entertainment, shopping and food areas still exist.

"Under the financial support issued by the Macau government, the long-term trajectory of a recovering economy should be retained," the association explained in the statement, adding that a gra-

dually stabilizing Covid-19 pandemic situation is beneficial in attracting more tourists to Macau.

The association's estimates for the August and September indices are worse, however, with 2.8 points predicted for both months.

The main reasons

behind these estimates are the constant falling of the Mainland consumer confidence index and the purchasing manager index for September, in addition to the calming of local investment, the decrease in gross gaming revenue, tourist arrivals and hotel occupancy. **AL**

ECONOMIC GROWTH WEAKENS AMID CONSTRUCTION SLOWDOWN

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S economic growth is sinking under pressure from a construction slowdown and power shortages, prompting warnings about a possible shock to its trading partners and global financial markets.

The world's second-largest economy grew by a weaker-than-expected 4.9% over a year ago in the three months ending in September, down from the previous quarter's 7.9%, government data showed yesterday. Factory output, retail sales and investment in construction and other fixed assets all weakened.

Manufacturing has been hampered by official curbs on energy use and shortages of processor chips and other components due to the coronavirus pandemic. Construction, an industry that supports millions of jobs, is slowing as regulators force developers to cut reliance on debt that Chinese leaders worry is dangerously high.

"Ripple effects to the rest of the world could be significant" due to weaker Chinese demand for raw materials, said Mo Ji of Fidelity International in a report. "Even developed markets, including the

AP PHOTO



U.S., would not be immune to a significant tightening in global financial conditions as a result of a negative China growth shock accompanied by financial stress."

Compared with the previous quarter, the way other major economies are measured, output barely grew in the July-September period, expanding by just 0.2%. That was down from 1.2% in the April-June period and one of the past decade's weakest quarters.

The slowdown adds to pressure on Beijing to prop up activity by easing borrowing controls and spending more on building public works. But forecasters said even if that happens, activity will weaken before policy changes take effect.

"Growth will slow further," Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics said in a report.

Chinese leaders are trying to steer the economy to more sustainable growth based on domestic

consumption instead of exports and investment and to reduce financial risk.

Construction and housing sales, an important source of demand for steel, copper and other industrial imports, have slowed since regulators ordered developers to reduce their debt levels.

One of the biggest, Evergrande Group, is struggling to avoid defaulting on \$310 billion owed to banks and bondholders. That has

fueled fears about other developers, though economists say the threat to global financial markets is small.

Factories in some provinces were ordered to shut down in mid-September to avoid exceeding official goals for energy use and energy intensity, or the amount used per unit of output. Some warned deliveries of goods might be delayed, raising the possibility of shortages of smartphones and other consumer products ahead of the Christmas shopping season.

Factory output barely grew in September, expanding by only 0.05% compared with August. That was down from the 7.3% growth for the first nine months of the year.

Private sector forecasters have cut their growth outlook this year for China, though they still expect about 8%, which would be among the world's strongest. The ruling Communist Party's official target is "more than 6%," which leaves Beijing room to keep its controls in place.

The near-term outlook "remains difficult," said Rajiv Biswas of IHS Market in a report. Real estate also is suffering from "fears of contagion to some other property developers."

This year's economic figures have been exaggerated due to comparison with 2020, when factories and stores were closed to fight the coronavirus. MDT/AP

AD

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Office hours:
Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30
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Vaccines, masks? Japan puzzling over sudden virus success

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

ALMOST overnight, Japan has become a stunning, and somewhat mysterious, coronavirus success story.

Daily new COVID-19 cases have plummeted from a mid-August peak of nearly 6,000 in Tokyo, with caseloads in the densely populated capital now routinely below 100, an 11-month low.

The bars are packed, the trains are crowded, and the mood is celebratory, despite a general bafflement over what, exactly, is behind the sharp drop.

Japan, unlike other places in Europe and Asia, has never had anything close to a lockdown, just a series of relatively toothless states of emergency.

Some possible factors in Japan's success include a belated but remarkably rapid vaccination campaign, an emptying out of many nightlife areas as fears spread during the recent surge in cases, a widespread practice, well before the pandemic, of wearing masks and bad weather in late August that kept people home.

But with vaccine efficacy gradually waning and winter approaching, experts worry that without knowing what exactly why cases have dropped so drastically, Japan could face another wave like this summer, when hospitals overflowed with serious cases and deaths soared — though the numbers were lower than pre-vaccination levels.

Many credit the vaccination campaign, especially among younger people, for bringing in-

fections down. Nearly 70 percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

“Rapid and intensive vaccinations in Japan among those younger than 64 might have created a temporary condition similar to herd-immunity,” said Dr. Kazuhiro Tateda, a Toho University professor of virology.

Tateda noted that vaccination rates surged in July to September, just as the more infectious delta variant was spreading fast.

He cautioned, however, that breakthrough infections in the U.S., Britain and other places where inoculations began months earlier than in Japan show that vaccines alone are not perfect and efficacy gradually wears off.

Japan's vaccinations started in mid-February, with health workers and the elderly first in line. Shortages of imported vaccines kept progress slow until late May, when the supply stabilized and daily inoculation targets were raised to above 1 million doses to maximize protection before the July 23-Aug. 8 Olympics.

The number of daily shots rose to about 1.5 million in July, pushing vaccination rates from 15% in early July to 65% by early October, exceeding the 57% of the United States.

Daily new cases surged just weeks ahead of the Olympics, forcing Japan to hold the Games with daily caseloads of more than 5,000 in Tokyo and around 20,000 nationwide in early August. Tokyo reported 40 cases Sunday, below

100 for the ninth straight day and lowest this year. Nationwide, Japan reported 429 cases Sunday for an accumulated total of about 1.71 million and 18,000 deaths since the pandemic began early last year.

So why the drop?

“It's a tough question, and we have to consider the effect of the vaccinations progress, which is extremely big,” said Disease Control and Prevention Center Director Norio Ohmagari. “At the same time, people who gather in high-risk environments, such as crowded and less-ventilated places, may have been already infected and acquired natural immunity by now.”

Many credit the vaccination campaign, especially among younger people, for bringing infections down

Though some speculated that the drop in cases might be due to less testing, Tokyo metropolitan government data showed the positivity rate fell from 25% in late August to 1% in mid-October, while the number of tests fell by one-third. Masataka Inokuchi, the Tokyo Medical Association deputy chief, said falling positivity rates show infections have slowed.

Japan's state of emergency measures were not lockdowns but requests that focused mainly

on bars and eateries, which were asked to close early and not serve alcohol. Many people continued to commute on crowded trains, and attended sports and cultural events at stadiums with some social distancing controls.

The emergency requests have ended and the government is gradually expanding social and economic activity while allowing athletic events and package tours on a trial basis using vaccination certificates and increased testing.

To speed up inoculations, former Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who left office recently, expanded the number of health workers legally eligible to give shots, opened large-scale vaccination centers and promoted workplace vaccinations beginning in late June.

Kyoto University professor Hiroshi Nishiura told a recent government advisory board meeting that he estimates vaccinations helped some 650,000 people avoid infection and saved more than 7,200 lives between March and September.

Many experts initially blamed younger people, seen drinking on the streets and in parks when the bars were closed, for spreading the virus, but said data showed many in their 40s and 50s also frequented nightlife districts. Most serious cases and deaths were among unvaccinated people in their 50s or younger.

Takaji Wakita, director of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, told reporters recently

he is worried people have already resumed partying in nightlife districts, noting that the slowing of infections may have already hit bottom.

“Looking ahead, it is important to further push down the caseloads in case of a future resurgence of infections,” Wakita said Thursday.

On Friday, new Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said a preparedness plan to be compiled by early November would include tougher limits on activities and require hospitals to provide more beds and staff for COVID-19 treatment in case infections soar in a “worst-case scenario.”

He did not elaborate on details.

Many people are cautious about letting down their guard, regardless of the numbers.

Mask-wearing “has become so normal,” said university student Mizuki Kawano. “I'm still worried about the virus,” she said.

“I don't want to get close to those who don't wear masks,” said her friend, Alice Kawaguchi.

Public health experts want a comprehensive investigation into why infections have dropped off.

An analysis of GPS data showed that people's movements in major downtown entertainment districts fell during the most recent, third state of emergency, which ended Sept. 30.

“I believe the decrease of people visiting entertainment districts, along with the vaccination progress, has contributed to the decline of infections,” said Atsushi Nishida, the director of the Research Center for Social Science & Medicine Sciences at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Medical Science.

But people headed back to entertainment districts as soon as the recent emergency ended, he said, and that may “affect the infection situation in coming weeks.” **MDT/AP**

AUKUS

Indonesia, Malaysia concerned about Australia's nuclear subs

THE foreign ministers of Malaysia and Indonesia expressed concern yesterday that Australia's plan to obtain nuclear-powered submarines may increase the rivalry of major powers in Southeast Asia.

The U.S., Britain and Australia announced last month that they have formed a security alliance that will help equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. The alliance will reshape relations in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Under the arrangement, Australia will build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines using U.S. expertise, while dumping a contract with France for diesel-electric subs. The nuclear subs will allow Australia to conduct longer patrols and give the alliance a stronger military presence in the region.

"This situation will certainly not benefit anyone," Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said after meeting with her Malaysian counterpart, Saifuddin Abdullah, in Jakarta. "We both agreed that efforts to maintain a peaceful and stable region must continue and don't want the current dynamics



to cause tension in the arms race and also in power projection."

The two ministers said at a joint news conference that they agreed to strengthen the unity and centrality of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and urged all members of the bloc to contribute to the stability, security, peace and prosperity of the region and respect international law.

Saifuddin said having a near-neighbor build new nuclear-powered submarines could encourage other countries to come more frequently into Southeast Asian territory.

Saifuddin is in Jakarta to prepare for a visit to Indonesia by Malaysian Prime

Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob later this year, his first overseas trip since taking office in August.

Saifuddin and Marsudi expressed disappointment with Myanmar for hindering a planned visit by an ASEAN envoy to help mediate in its political crisis.

Myanmar's refusal to cooperate with the envoy's visit led to a decision by ASEAN to invite a non-political representative instead of Myanmar's leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, to participate in an Oct. 26-28 ASEAN summit.

"The ASEAN special envoy was not given the access he deserved to visit Myanmar to fulfill his mandate," Saifu-

ddin said. "We are very disappointed."

Myanmar's military ousted an elected civilian government in February and seized power. There has been widespread opposition to its rule.

Marsudi said there has been no significant progress in implementing an agreement which ASEAN reached with Min Aung Hlaing in April.

The five-point agreement called for violence to end immediately and for the start of a dialogue to find a peaceful solution "in the interests of the people." It was also agreed that a special ASEAN envoy would mediate in the talks.

"Our efforts as a family did not get a good response from the Myanmar military," Marsudi said.

The two ministers said they also agreed to cooperate in responding to the coronavirus pandemic, which will be the main topic of the ASEAN summit, in the protection of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, and in the settlement of the maritime boundary between the two countries.

ASEAN's members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Brunei is chair of the bloc this year.

ASEAN has formal partnerships with several countries including Australia, China, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea and Pakistan as well as the European Union.

Malaysia and Indonesia share many similarities in religion, language and culture. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1987 SHARES PLUNGE AFTER WALL STREET CRASH



The world's stock market has collapsed after shares on Wall Street suffered a wave of panic selling.

The Dow Jones industrial average plummeted by a record 508 points, registering a percentage drop of 22.5%.

On Wall Street itself, share prices crashed across the board in frenzied trading that saw collective losses worse than the infamous "Black Monday" in October 1929.

In London the value of quoted shares fell by £50bn as the FT 30-share index dived 183.7 points to 1629.2.

The previous sharpest one day fall was on March 1, 1974 after Labour's indecisive election victory, when shares fell 7.1%.

The FTSE index also crashed more than 300 points with a loss of £63bn.

The collapse was triggered by Friday's fall on Wall Street and a steep drop in Tokyo.

The White House attempted to calm investors by issuing a statement declaring that President Ronald Reagan remained convinced that the US economy was sound.

Dealers marked prices down in an effort to discourage sellers amid scenes close to hysteria.

The percentage drop was the second largest ever next to the 24.4% fall of 12 December, 1914.

Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange John Phelan said: "This is the nearest thing to a financial melt-down I've ever come across. I would not want to be around for another one like this."

But officials warned against comparisons, saying that the situation is dramatically different from 1929.

Trading activity was driven down by growing fears of rising interest rates and a falling dollar.

These were exacerbated by the news that the US had retaliated against Iranian attacks in the Gulf by bombarding an offshore oil rig.

Courtesy BBC News

USA

Bill Clinton back home after hospitalization from infection



BILL Clinton arrived yesterday [Macau time] at his home in New York to continue recovering from an infection that left him in treatment for six days at a Southern California hospital, officials said.

The former president left the University of California Irvine Medical Center around 8 a.m. with Hillary Clinton on his arm. Dressed in jeans and a sports coat and wearing a face mask, he made his way out of the hospital slowly and stopped to shake hands with doctors and nurses li-

ned up on the sidewalk.

He gave a thumbs-up when a reporter asked how he was feeling, and he and Hillary Clinton then boarded a black SUV. They departed in a motorcade escorted by the California Highway Patrol and headed to the airport.

Bill Clinton's "fever and white blood cell count are normalized, and he will return home to New York to finish his course of antibiotics," Dr. Alpesh N. Amin said in a statement shared on Twitter by a Clinton spokesman.

Clinton, 75, was admitted Tuesday to the hospital southeast of Los Angeles with an infection unrelated to COVID-19. He arrived Sunday evening at his home in Chappaqua, New York, to continue his recovery. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

In the wake of the 1987 crash, which also became known as Black Monday, markets around the world were put on restricted trading mainly because at the time computers were dealing with so many orders that they were unable to keep up.

By the end of October, stock markets in Australia had fallen by 41.8%, Hong Kong 45.8% and the United Kingdom 26.4%.

The effects of the crash were not as crippling as expected because it was not followed by a depression.

Over the next decade interest rates went down and investors showed new faith in the market. The debate over the cause of the crash continued for many years after the event but economists have never been able to name a single factor that ushered in Black Monday.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The moon's sweet union with pleasure-seeking Venus makes it an ideal day to pamper yourself, prioritize your needs, and state your story to the world.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

The moon's sweet meet-up with heartfelt Venus and optimistic Jupiter makes it easy to maintain a good mood and strike an emotional equilibrium.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Luna's sweet connection with bond-building Venus makes it easy to make warm connections, while her sweet link with Jupiter offers a big-picture, positive mindset to enjoy.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

As a Cancer, it's critical to establish an emotionally supportive home base. Once you have that, you're ready to reach for the stars and devote yourself to a career path.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Stretch yourself beyond your known limits, Leo. You're concerned with breaking up stagnant routines and finding a sense of adventure today as the moon roams through pioneering Aries.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Luna's heartfelt connection with relationship-focused Venus makes it easy to smooth over ruffled feathers on the home front, while her link with Jupiter provides relief through honing your craft.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

The universe is encouraging you to take a hard look at the narratives swirling around in that arena, especially around your give-and-take of time and resources with other people.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

To feel your best, it's critical that you give yourself things to accomplish today. The moon careens through self-motivated, encouraging you to focus on productive measures, exercise, and balancing out your body.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

It's been hard to tell who's a friend from foe in recent weeks, Sagittarius. Mercury's retrograde phase has had you reviewing who belongs in your close circle and which of your goals are still relevant.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Luna's easygoing connection with bond-building Venus and faith-instilling Jupiter makes it easy to feel good when you keep your activities close to home and restorative.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Luna's supportive alignment with bond-building Venus, making it easy to turn on the charm in group settings or when it comes to patching up rocky friendships.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Send your attention towards your self-confidence today, Pisces. You've got an array of skills to share with the world. Why continue to not believe in those very talents that make you unique?

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

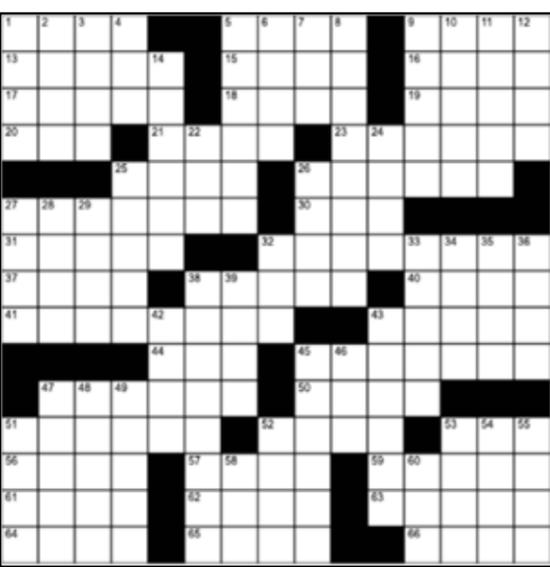
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	4	13	fine
Harbin	-5	8	fine
Tianjin	13	17	rain
Urumqi	13	15	overcast
Xi'an	14	16	rain
Lhasa	5	12	fine
Chengdu	18	25	overcast
Chongqing	17	20	rain
Kunming	15	21	cloudy
Nanjing	23	28	rain
Shanghai	11	19	overcast
Wuhan	-5	7	cloudy
Hangzhou	9	18	overcast
Taipei	-3	11	fine
Guangzhou	18	28	cloudy
Hong Kong	23	26	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-1	5	rain
Frankfurt	8	13	rain
Paris	17	23	overcast
London	16	19	rain
New York	14	21	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Sign of injury; 5- Wristband; 9- Thick slice; 13- 1977 George Burns film; 15- Shrinking sea; 16- Story; 17- One who cries "uncle?"; 18- Actress Foch; 19- Salt tree; 20- Dash lengths; 21- Diamond stats; 23- Device for holding up a stocking; 25- Sign; 26- Feathered fisher; 27- Waterfall; 30- Pronoun for a ship; 31- The Little Mermaid; 32- Qualified; 37- "Peter Pan" pooch; 38- Man of morals; 40- With "eye," unerring aim; 41- Agreeable; 43- Steal, ransack; 44- Ambient music pioneer; 45- Like leftovers; 47- Regular customer; 50- Captures; 51- Place of shelter; 52- Official records; 53- Ed.'s pile; 56- Canadian gas brand; 57- Voodoo amulet; 59- Jam; 61- School founded in 1440; 62- Chemical used on trees; 63- Go into; 64- Sand hill by the sea; 65- Songbird; 66- ___ a soul;

DOWN: 1- Unit of loudness; 2- Lower jaw; 3- Matures; 4- Fabled bird; 5- Like a dog; 6- "Trinity" author; 7- Devoted follower; 8- Main vessel of a shipping line; 9- Fab Four name; 10- Starbucks order; 11- Narrow street; 12- Ale, e.g.; 14- Pertaining to the skin; 22- Night spot; 24- Take down ___; 25- Current location; 26- Christiania, today; 27- Injectable diazepam, in military lingo; 28- Composer Khachaturian; 29- Cosecant's reciprocal; 32- Language ending; 33- Brainstorms; 34- Defeat; 35- Wash, in France; 36- Biblical garden; 38- Irregular; 39- North Carolina university; 42- Dynamic beginning; 43- Sales incentive; 45- Open the champagne; 46- Writer Hentoff; 47- Cut's partner; 48- Burning desire?; 49- Steak order; 51- Take note of; 52- Cracked; 53- Introduction to physics?; 54- Plaintiff; 55- Agile; 58- Paystub?; 60- B&B;

Yesterday's solution



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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NEW
 Hellene Gardens **HKD 7,980,000**
 Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 1/2 2 1/2 1 1/2

AD

CRYPTOCURRENCY

BITCOIN-MINING POWER PLANT RAISES IRE OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS

MICHAEL HILL

An obstacle to large-scale bitcoin mining is finding enough cheap energy to run the huge, power-gobbling computer arrays that create and transact cryptocurrency. One mining operation in central New York came up with a novel solution that has alarmed environmentalists. It uses its own power plant.

Greenidge Generation runs a once-mothballed plant near the shore of Seneca Lake in the Finger Lakes region to produce about 44 megawatts to run 15,300 computer servers, plus additional electricity it sends into the state's power grid. The megawatts dedicated to Bitcoin might be enough electricity to power more than 35,000 homes.

Proponents call it a competitive way to mine increasingly popular cryptocurrencies, without putting a drain on the existing power grid.

Environmentalists see the plant as a climate threat.

They fear a wave of resurrected fossil-fuel plants pumping out greenhouse gasses more for private profit than public good. Seeing Greenidge as a test case, they are asking the state to deny renewal of the plant's air quality permit and put the brakes on similar projects.

"The current state of our climate demands action on cryptocurrency mining," said Liz Moran of Earthjustice. "We are jeopardizing the state's abilities to meet our climate goals, and we set the stage for the rest of the country as a result."

The former coal plant, in a touristy region known for its glacial lakes and riesling wines, was converted to natural gas by Greenidge and began producing electricity in 2017. Bitcoin mining at the plant, which has a 106-megawatt capacity, started in earnest last year. The company said it was "bringing a piece of the world's digital future" to upstate New York.

"For decades, this region has been told it would see new industries and opportunities," Greenidge said in a prepared statement. "We are actually making it happen, and doing it fully within the state's nation-leading high environmental standards."

Bitcoin miners unlock bitcoins by solving complex, unique puzzles. As the value of Bitcoin goes up, the puzzles become increasingly more difficult, and it requires more computer power to solve them. Estimates on how much energy Bitcoin uses vary.

Greenidge said it mined 729 bitcoins over three months ending Sept. 30. The value of cryptocurrency fluctuates, and yes-

AP PHOTO



Smokestacks from the Greenidge Generation power plant tower above nearby homes in Dresden, N.Y.

terday, one bitcoin was worth over \$60,000.

Opponents are frustrated that Greenidge applied to run a power plant but are now operating a mine that is taking up more of the plant's power.

Greenidge says mining was not part of the plan when the plant came back online and note they continue to provide power to the grid. From January through June, Greenidge said it used 58% of its power for mining.

Supporters see it as an economic boon in a part of upstate New York that could use the help. Douglas Paddock, chairman of the Yates County Legislature, testified at a public hearing this week that the plant has brought 45 high-paying jobs and made a "significant contribution" to the area through tax payments and capital investments.

Some opposition to the plant centers on the potential effects of its water withdrawals from Seneca Lake. But air quality issues have taken center stage as the state Department of Environmental Conservation reviews the plant's air emission permits.

Greenidge has said it's in compliance with its permits and that the plant is 100% carbon neutral, thanks to the purchase of carbon offsets, such as forestry programs and projects that capture methane from landfills.

Opponents claim the plant undercuts the state's efforts to dramatically slash greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades under its 2019 climate law.

A large coalition of environmental groups and other organizations this week asked Gov. Kathy Hochul to deny the air permit for Greenidge and to take a similar action to keep an existing plant near

Buffalo from becoming a mining site. The coalition wants Hochul to set a "national precedent" and enact a statewide moratorium on the energy intensive "proof-of-work" cryptocurrency used by bitcoin miners.

Environmentalists estimate that there are 30 plants in New York that could be converted into mining operations.

"I really think more than anything, this plant is a significant test for whether the state's climate law is really worth anything," said Judith Enck, who served as the EPA's regional northeastern U.S. admi-

nistrator under President Barack Obama.

Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand have separately asked the federal Environmental Protection Agency to exercise oversight.

Around the country, there are other power plants being used for cryptocurrency mining under different types of arrangements.

In Venango County, Pennsylvania, a generation plant that converts coal waste into power is being used to mine bitcoins and can provide electricity to the grid when needed. Stronghold Digital

Mining has plans to replicate that kind operation at two other sites in Pennsylvania.

And in Montana, a coal-fired generating station is now providing 100% of its energy to Marathon Digital Holdings for bitcoin mining under a power purchase agreement.

"We had previously done what many miners do, which is you find an industrial building, set it up for mining and then you contract for power from the grid," Marathon CEO Fred Thiel said. "And we wanted to flip that model upside down because we knew that there are lots of underutilized energy generation sources in the U.S."

Thiel said that harmful emissions are low because of the quality of the coal and pollution controls, and that the plant would be carbon offset by the end of next year. He said his company is focused on moving toward renewable energy, saying cryptocurrency miners can provide crucial financial incentives to build more clean energy projects.

New York state has yet to make a determination on Greenidge's permits.

Greenidge said that even if the plant ran at full capacity, its potential emissions equate to 0.23% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for 2030.

However, state Environmental Commissioner Basil Seggos tweeted last month that "Greenidge has not shown compliance with NY's climate law" based on goals in that law.

"New York state is leading on climate change," Seggos said in a prepared statement, "and we have some major concerns about the role cryptocurrency mining may play in generating additional greenhouse gas emissions." **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM inaugurates second edition of High School Diploma Program



65 aspiring team members on-board for a 'new learning journey'

MGM has launched the second edition of its High School Diploma Program for 65 "spirited learners," the company announced in a press release yesterday.

In the announcement, MGM says it is dedicated to "promoting lifelong learning among its team members, [and] strives to provide a diverse range of training and opportunities, in view of helping [participants] unlock new achievements and career advancement."

In 2016, MGM launched the continuing education scheme, designed to let employees attain their secondary school diplomas while working.

The first edition of the program helped 41 employees to attain their middle and high school diplomas, with seven of them advancing to university.

The program is fully supported by the gaming and hospitality operator.

With a proven track record for the program, this year sees MGM part-

ner with Escola Seong Fan da Associação Comercial de Macau (Macau Chamber of Commerce), with the support of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), to offer the high school curriculum to 65 employees from seven departments.

To assist workers with their studies, MGM hosts classes taught by the school's teachers at its properties, "and the relevant departments ... re-arrange their rosters to fit in [with] class schedules."

The government "strives to promote continuing education which benefits all Macau residents. It is not easy for an employee to engage in study during leisure time. But thanks to the strong backing of MGM, its team members can enjoy a smooth learning journey," said Wong Ka Ki, Head of the Department of Non-tertiary Education of the DSEDJ.

Cheang Hong Kuong, Principal of Escola Seong Fan, remarked that "the program embodies a great accomplishment achieved by the synergy between DSEDJ, MGM and our school."

GYMNASTICS

Uchimura, five new Olympic champs headline worlds

JIM ARMSTRONG, TOKYO

KOHEI Uchimura will be aiming for a measure of redemption when the world championships begin in his hometown this week in what could be a competition finale for one of the greatest male gymnasts of all time.

Stung by the disappointment of not qualifying for the horizontal bar final at the Tokyo Olympics, the 32-year-old Uchimura will be aiming to reclaim the world title on horizontal bar he last won in 2015.

The 50th artistic gymnastics world championships started yesterday and will continue through Sunday in Kitakyushu, featuring more than 300 gymnasts representing 59 countries. The first medals will be awarded Thursday in the women's all-around.

Simone Biles and Sunisa Lee of the United States aren't taking part but five newly-minted Olympic gold medalists — Daiki Hashimoto of Japan, Rebeca Andrade of Brazil, South Korea's Shin Jea-



Kohei Uchimura

-hwan and Russians Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova — will give the event star power.

Uchimura is a six-time world all-around champion and a seven-time Olympic medalist. His fall from the horizontal bar at the Tokyo Games was not how he wanted to end his illustrious career.

"I know the word 'revenge' will

be mentioned," Uchimura told Japanese online sports site Sponichi Annex. "But to be able to hold the event in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, all I'm feeling is appreciation. So I want to turn in a performance that is full of appreciation."

Uchimura has been dealing with injuries in recent years and has said in the past that he would

not have continued competing if Tokyo hadn't hosted the Olympics.

His main challenger this week will be Hashimoto who, at 19, became the youngest man ever to win the Olympic all-around title at the Tokyo Olympics.

Hashimoto won the gold in the horizontal bar after Uchimura faltered, becoming the new face of the sport in Japan.

"It's always an honor to compete with Kohei Uchimura in any kind of competition," Hashimoto said. "Of course, we are teammates, but I'm very excited to compete against him at the world championships, which means we are going to compete for world No. 1."

Hashimoto will be the clear favorite to take the men's all-around title. Defending champion Nikita Nagornyy of Russia is not competing. The only man who finished inside the Top 10 in the Tokyo all-around was eighth-place Ahmet Onder of Turkey.

This means there is an opportunity for young gymnasts such as Sergei Naidin of Russia, Ilia Kostun of Ukraine and Adem Asil of Turkey.

Andrade, who took gold on the women's vault in Tokyo and silver in the all-around, has elected to perform only on three apparatus this week and will not contend for the all-around title.

The unusual timing of the event — Kitakyushu is the first gymnastics world championship to be held in an Olympic year since 1996 — provides a unique opportunity for Tokyo Olympians to add to their accomplishments while giving newcomers a chance to win medals on the road to Paris 2024.

Twelve world medals — seven for men and five for women — will be in play this week in Japan. **MDT/AP**



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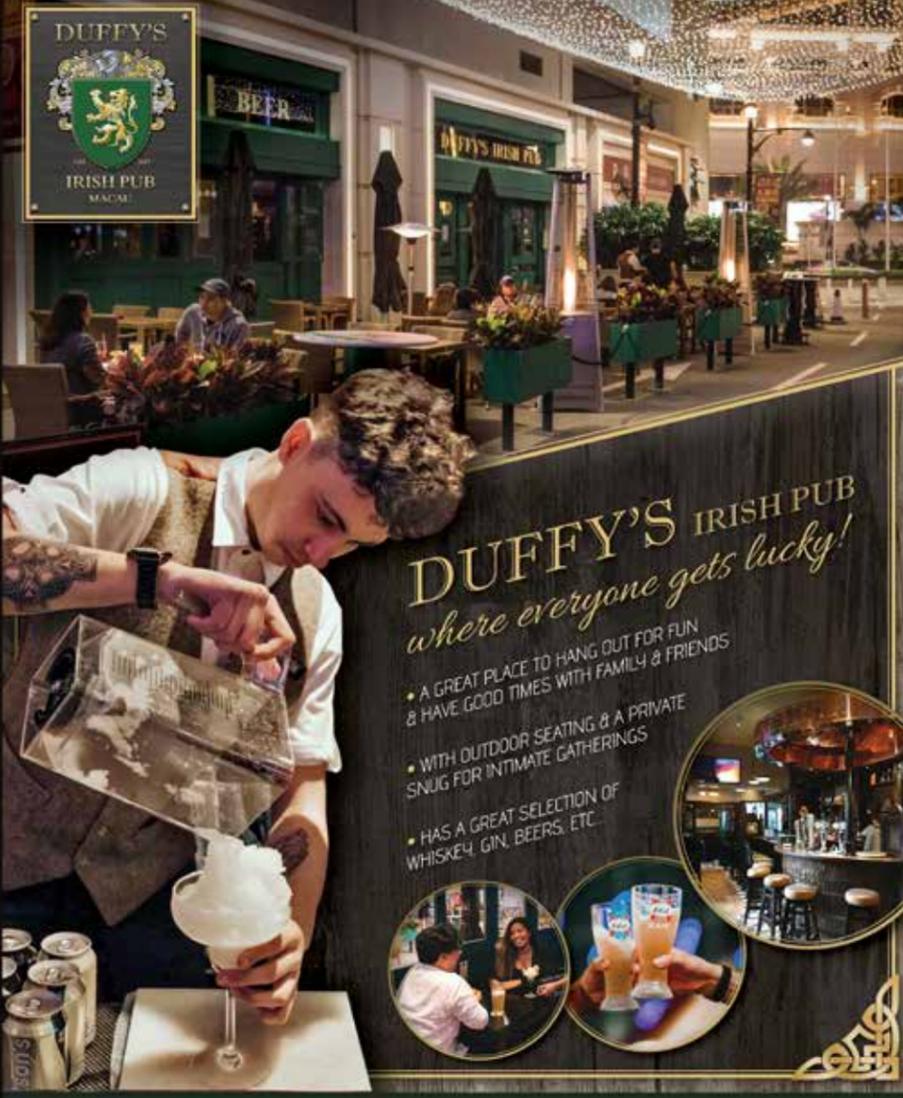
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AD

OPINION

World Views

Sumedha Gupta, IUPUI
 MDT/The Conversation



**HOW MANY LIVES HAVE
 CORONAVIRUS VACCINES
 SAVED? MANY**

More than 200 million U.S. residents have gotten at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine with the expectation that the vaccines slow virus transmission and save lives.

Researchers know the efficacy of the vaccines from large-scale clinical trials, the gold standard for medical research. The studies found the vaccines to be very effective at preventing severe COVID-19 and especially good at preventing death. But it's important to track any new treatment in the real world as the population-level benefits of vaccines could differ from the efficacy found in clinical trials.

For instance, some people in the U.S. have only been getting the first shot of a two-shot vaccine and are therefore less protected than a fully vaccinated person. Alternatively, vaccinated people are much less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others, including those who are not vaccinated. This could make vaccines more effective at a population level than in the clinical trials.

I am a health economist, and my team and I have been studying the effects of public policy interventions like vaccination have had on the pandemic. We wanted to know how many lives vaccines may have saved due to the states' COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in the U.S.

In March 2021, when weekly data on state COVID-19 vaccinations started to become reliably available from state agencies, my team began to analyze the association between state vaccination rates and the subsequent COVID-19 cases and deaths in each state. Our goal was to build a model that was accurate enough to measure the effect of vaccination within the complicated web of factors that influence COVID-19 deaths.

To do this, our model compares COVID-19 incidence in states with high vaccination rates against states with low vaccination rates. As part of the analysis, we controlled for things that influence the spread of the coronavirus, like state-by-state differences in weather and population density, seasonally driven changes in social behavior and non-pharmaceutical interventions like stay-at-home orders, mask mandates and overnight business closures. We also accounted for the fact that there is a delay between when a person is first vaccinated and when their immune system has built up protection.

To check the strength of our model before playing with variables, we first compared reported deaths with an estimate that our model produced.

When we fed it all of the information available – including vaccination rates – the model calculated that by May 9, 2021, there should have been 569,193 COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. The reported death count by that date was 578,862, less than a 2% difference from our model's prediction.

Equipped with our well-working statistical model, we were then able to “turn off” the vaccination effect and see how much of a difference vaccines made.

Using near real-time data of state vaccination rates, coronavirus cases and deaths in our model, we found that in the absence of vaccines, 708,586 people would have died by May 9, 2021. We then compared that to our model estimate of deaths with vaccines: 569,193. The difference between those two numbers is just under 140,000. Our model suggests that vaccines saved 140,000 lives by May 9, 2021.

Our study only looked at the few months just after vaccination began. Even in that short time frame, COVID-19 vaccinations saved many thousands of lives despite vaccination rates still being fairly low in several states by the end of our study period. I can say with certainty that vaccines have since then saved many more lives – and will continue to do so as long as the coronavirus is still around.

Colin Powell, who served Democratic and Republican presidents in war and peace but whose sterling reputation was forever stained by his faulty claims to justify the U.S. war in Iraq, died yesterday of COVID-19 complications. He was 84.

A veteran of the Vietnam War, Powell rose to the rank of four-star general and in 1989 became the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In that role he oversaw the U.S. invasion of Panama and later the U.S. invasion of Kuwait to oust the Iraqi army in 1991.

But his legacy was marred when, in 2003, he went before the U.N. Security Council as secretary of state and made the case for U.S. war against Iraq at a moment of great international skepticism. He cited faulty information claiming Saddam Hussein had secretly stashed weapons of mass destruction. Iraq's claims that it had no such weapons represented “a web of lies,” he told the world body.

In announcing his death on social media, Powell's family said he had been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus.



AP PHOTO



William and Kate

**CELEBRITIES JOIN
 PRINCE WILLIAM FOR
 EARTHSHOT PRIZE AWARD**

SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

CELEBRITIES joined Prince William in London yesterday [Macau time] for the inaugural awards ceremony of his Earthshot Prize, an ambitious environmental program that aims to find new ideas and technologies around the world to tackle climate change and Earth's most pressing challenges.

The winners announced included the government of Costa Rica, which was honored for a project that pays local citizens to restore natural ecosystems, and the city of Milan, which was handed a prize for its Food Waste Hubs program, which recovers food from supermarkets and restaurants and distributes it to those in need.

Actors Emma Thompson, Emma Watson and David Oyelowo joined William and Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, in handing out the awards at Alexandra Palace in north London.

Guests were asked to “consider the environment when choosing their outfit,” and Watson arrived wearing a gown

made from 10 wedding dresses from the charity Oxfam. Kate wore an Alexander McQueen dress made for her in 2011, while her husband wore a dark green velvet blazer and a polo neck.

William and his charity, The Royal Foundation, launched the Earthshot Prize last year, inspired by President John F. Kennedy's 1962 “Moonshot” speech that challenged and inspired Americans to go to the moon.

The prize, to be awarded to five winners every year until 2030, is billed as the most prestigious of its kind. Each winner will receive a grant worth 1 million pounds (\$1.4 million) to develop and scale up their ideas.

“There's been lots of amazing ideas over the past decades but it's the implementation that really counts, so that's what this is all about. So it's really a reason to be cheerful,” Thompson said.

The other winners were a land-based coral farm in the Bahamas to restore dying coral reefs; a green hydrogen technology developed to transform how homes and buildings are powered; and an India-based technology that creates fuel from agricultural waste in a bid to stop crop burning.

William has said he wanted the initiative to inject some optimism into the climate debate, and he urged young people not to give up hope for the future.

“For too long, we haven't done enough to protect the planet for your future. The Earthshot is for you,” he said. “In the next 10 years, we are going to act. We are going to find the solutions to repair our planet.”

The United States will host next year's award ceremony, he added.

The ceremony came days ahead of the COP26 U.N. climate change summit in Glasgow, which begins Oct. 31. William, his father Prince Charles and Queen Elizabeth II are all expected to attend.

Earlier this week William criticized the space race and space tourism, saying in an interview that the world's greatest minds should be focused on repairing Earth instead of “trying to find the next place to go and live.” MDT/AP

Egypt's government will soon require public servants to have a vaccination certificate or show a weekly negative COVID-19 test before entering their workplaces. The government announced the new measures yesterday. It said the requirements will be applied starting November 15. The measures also require public to show proof of vaccination to enter government buildings starting December 1, according to a government statement.

Russia's foreign minister said yesterday that the country is suspending its mission to NATO. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the move is in response to last week's expulsion by NATO of eight members of Russia's mission to the military alliance. NATO said that they were secretly working as intelligence officers and halved the size of Moscow's team able to work at its headquarters.

Germany Journalists at one of the largest newspaper groups have protested their publisher's decision to nix a lengthy investigation into alleged abuse of power by the chief editor of the country's top-selling tabloid newspaper. A letter circulated on social media accused Ippen.Media and its publisher, Dirk Ippen, of “breach of trust” for deciding to halt the report, which had been months in the making.

Portugal An international police operation has nabbed cocaine with a street value of around 200 million euros on a yacht in the Atlantic Ocean, authorities said yesterday. Portuguese police said the seizure was the largest in Europe in recent years and the biggest in Portugal for 15 years.

AP PHOTO



Thailand Heavy rains caused new flooding yesterday, with authorities forced to release water into an already swollen river after a reservoir reached full capacity, and others facing the same possibility. Authorities in the central province of Suphan Buri said flood warnings were in effect for communities along the Tha Chin River after water was released into it from the Krasiao reservoir.