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DISCOVER
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GOV'T REASSURED THE PUBLIC THAT SUPPLIES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ARE AMPLE, DISCOURAGING PANIC BUYING

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ICONIC JUMBO FLOATING RESTAURANT CAPSIZES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

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STATS: THE CITY RECORDED ABOUT 601,000 TOURISTS IN MAY, 30% DOWN YEAR-ON-YEAR

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AP PHOTO



Pakistan's newly elected Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif (pictured, left) appeared in court yesterday in connection with an old corruption case and was granted exemption from further appearances in person in the hearings, his defense lawyer said. The case dating back four years is related to Sharif's alleged links to a multi-million dollar housing scam in the eastern city of Lahore, according to the attorney, Amjad Pervez.

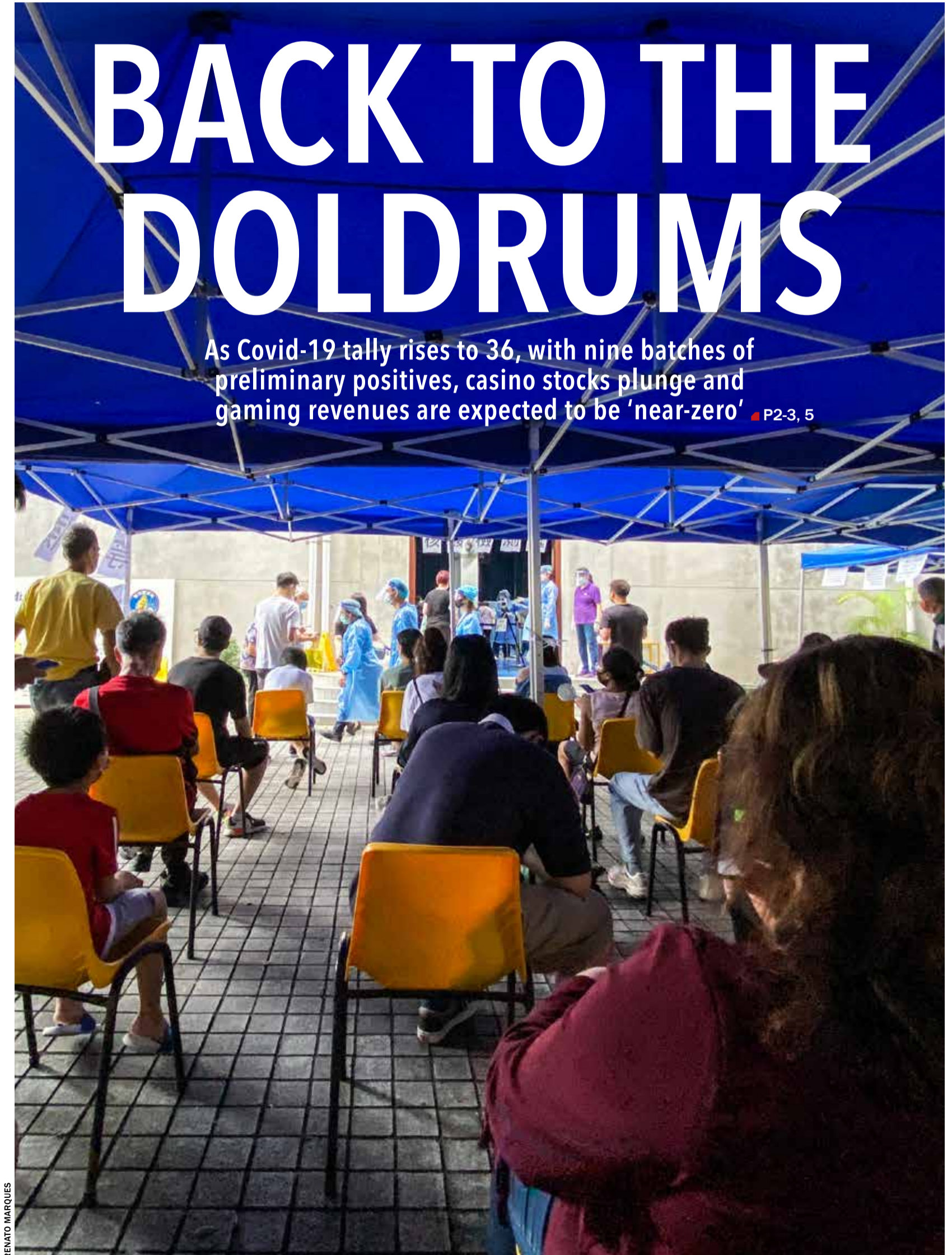
Lebanon's Health Ministry said yesterday authorities have detected the country's first case of monkeypox in a person who returned from abroad and is now isolating at home. The ministry said the person is stable and that authorities are tracking the person's contacts. It did not provide further details.

Syria An attack on a civilian bus in northern Syria yesterday killed 13 people, including 11 soldiers, and wounded three troops, Syrian state media reported, quoting an unnamed military official. According to state news agency, SANA, the attack occurred in the province of Raqqqa, which was once controlled by the extremist Islamic State group.

Iran yesterday hanged a man convicted of killing two clerics in a stabbing attack in April at a revered Shiite shrine, the country's state television reported. The report says the death penalty was carried out by hanging after the country's Supreme Court upheld a verdict issued earlier by a Revolutionary Court in northeastern city of Mashhad, the place of the attack.

German prosecutors said yesterday that they have seized three apartments and a bank account owned by a Russian lawmaker and his wife under European Union sanctions imposed because of the invasion of Ukraine. Prosecutors in Munich said the Duma lawmaker and his wife jointly own two of the apartments in the Bavarian city, and continued to earn money from rent on the properties in violation of sanctions.

More on backpage



RENATO MARQUES

BACK TO THE DOLDRUMS

As Covid-19 tally rises to 36, with nine batches of preliminary positives, casino stocks plunge and gaming revenues are expected to be 'near-zero' P2-3, 5

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Tally rises to 36 cases, majority asymptomatic

RENATO MARQUES

THE number of Covid-19 confirmed cases in Macau has risen to a total of 36, the director of the Health Bureau (SSM), Dr. Alvis Lo, said yesterday during a press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

According to the health official, at 4 p.m. yesterday the authorities had confirmed a total of 36 cases, of which the large majority (26 cases) are people not presenting, for the time being, any symptoms of the disease.

The other 10 cases are people with some respiratory symptoms, although very light ones, Lo said. For the time being there were no severe or concerning cases reported.

Lo also revealed that the authorities have divided these cases into two different groups or clusters, and epidemiologic investigations have already found links between the two groups, indicating that the infections are related.

Although the source of the outbreak is not yet confirmed, the authorities have determined that the clusters are related to a worker at a roasted meats shop located at the Rua da Emenda, near the Sacred Heart Canossian College (SHCC).



According to additional information provided by the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, the first cluster is comprised of 23 people and is related to the Yim Lai building at Rua Manuel de Arriaga. The second cluster (13 people) is mostly related to people living at the Tat Cheong building at the Rua de Afonso de Albuquerque,

a street that is a continuation of the first one.

According to an attempt to reconstruct the situation and explain the clusters and the links between them, the health authorities noted that several positive cases were clients of the roasted meats store or passed it frequently, whereas the second cluster has links to a fruit and vegetable store located across

the street from the roasted meats store.

The cases spread since several of the workers involved have links to a restaurant in the Nam Van area. The latest cases detected were a client of this restaurant and her daughter.

"We found a link between these two groups that are also related to a case confirmed in Zhuhai. A person that works at the roasted meats es-

tablissement at the Rua da Emenda. Several of the infected people were frequently at this place. We can't tell at this moment who was infected first, but we believe that this worker took the [Covid-19] virus home and passed the virus to their housemates," Leong said. "The second group has links to a fruit shop across the street with a family member in the second group [...]. This is what we

ZHUHAI SEES TWO ASYMPTOMATIC CASES FROM MACAU

STAFF REPORTER

THREE new asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 positive cases have been detected in Zhuhai, with two of entrants from Macau, health agencies in Zhuhai announced yesterday.

The two entrants reside in Hengqin and Zhuhai's Xiangzhou District. Both crossed the border in the evening on June 18. The Hengqin resident tested negative in the test-upon-arrival but was identified on the next day as a close contact with a Macau positive case. The other person tested positive on June 19.

Both people are now hospitalized in a designa-

ted hospital in Xiangzhou District.

As they have travelled around within the city, tracking of close contacts is under way in Zhuhai, the city's health agencies added.

The third case is an entrant from Hong Kong.

Arrivals from Macau to Zhuhai are required to undergo a "7+7" quarantine measure.

Individuals entering Zhuhai from Macau since June 15 shall report to their communities, employers or hotels of accommodation immediately, undergo a seven-day home quarantine (outdoor activities are not allowed) and

another seven-day home health monitoring (staying at home is strongly advised), restrain from visiting workplaces, school campus or public venues and avoid using public transportation. Nucleic acid testing is required on the first, third, seventh and 14th day.

Those entering Zhuhai from red-code or yellow-code zones of Macau shall undergo seven-day centralized quarantine (with nucleic acid testing each day) and another seven-day home health quarantine (outdoor activities are not allowed and nucleic acid testing required on the 10th and 14th day).



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Mass testing finds nine groups of preliminary positives

RENATO MARQUES

THE citywide mass testing for Covid-19 which commenced June 19 noontime and continuing until June 21 has found more preliminary positive infections, the director of the Health Bureau (SSM), Dr. Alvis Lo, said yesterday during a press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

According to Lo, in addition to the previous six groups of tests that had tested preliminarily positive earlier, yesterday another three were found, raising the total to nine.

As Dr Lo explained, since the mass testing samples are tested in groups of 10 samples at one time to accelerate the process, there was a potential number between nine and 90 cases to be found among these samples.

He also mentioned that the procedure entailed calling all people whose samples tested positive to do another test, to confirm which of the samples contain the virus.

"From one of the sets, we already found that one of the samples was positive and the other nine have tested negative," Lo said, referring to the samples collected on Sunday at the Kiang Wu Hospital.

He added that both cases 35 and 36, added yesterday, were found through the mass testing process.

He also said that at this point the authorities are still testing these other people to ascertain who is infected, but he noted that they were looking for a potential case where one contaminated sample caused a group of nine to test positive.

"We could confirm that there

are others, but we have not concluded the process yet. We did a first analysis and put together some pieces of this puzzle and we are now starting to get a clear picture," he said, noting that the main goal of the mass testing process is to triage people avoiding further infections.

He said that the reason the government has supplied three kits of Rapid Antigen Tests for each person participating in the citywide testing is to facilitate the process of finding other cases within the community.

"We can use those kits for different purposes. We hope that people can read the instructions and learn the procedure to do the self-test so in case we need them to do it, they have the knowledge," Lo said, explaining that in cases of group samples testing positive, the government can request the individuals to do a self-test first and only if the self-test returns positive, are they called to do an individual test at the public hospital, saving time and resources.

Pleased with the rate of the turnout for the mass testing, which had reached about 67% of the population within the first 28 hours, Lo noted that he hopes the authorities can contain the Covid-19 spread quickly and effectively, avoiding a broad spread over the city.

"We are restricting the risk to the red zones, so we have a clear focus on which people to target and avoid a larger spread across the city," he said.

The SSM director advised that people should assume a very defensive position and treat everyone in their surroundings as potentially infected, particularly when they go to have their test

sample collected.

"It is very easy to get contaminated in a process like this if you don't consider everyone else as possibly infected, and enforce maximum care," he said.

According to the figures revealed, until 4 p.m. on Monday, a total of 459,687 people had already completed their tests, from which 269,628 had already been analyzed and returned negative.

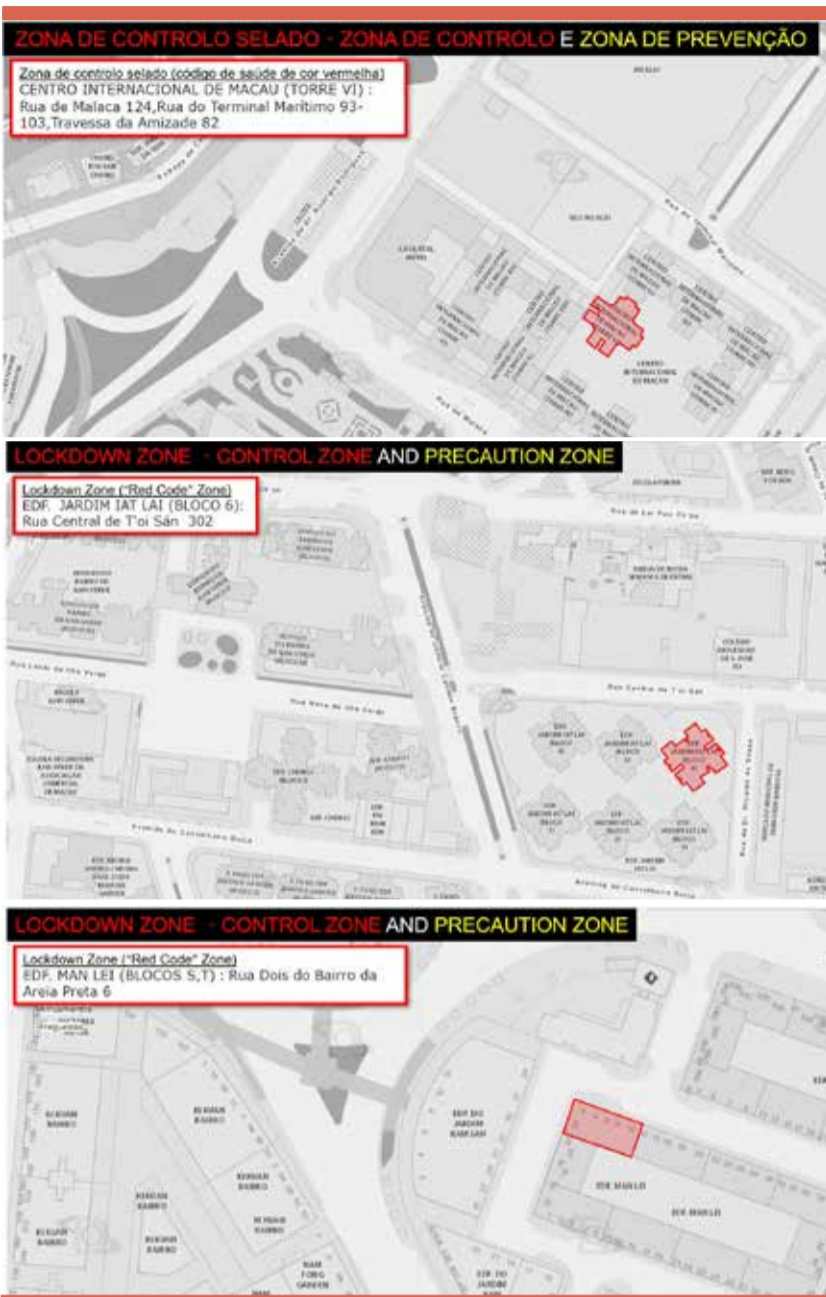
BOOKINGS AND CROWD GATHERINGS STILL AN ISSUE

Addressing the difficulties experienced by many residents in finding an open slot to book a nucleic acid test, as well as the long lines that were seen in many of the sampling collection posts, Lo attributed it to a lack of respect to people in the system.

"We have verified that in some posts there are extreme peaks of demand times. This happens mostly because people are not respecting the booking time or even doing a pre-booking before heading to the posts. We have seen some unnecessary gatherings and longer waiting times because some people are hasty arriving too early to the posts. This causes unnecessary crowds that we did not wish to see."

Remarking on the number of slots available and the difficulties of finding a booking, Lo said that the services try to adjust to the demand but that they cannot know in advance that a certain post will have a high demand at a given time.

"Slots also change according to staff and other things. We are adjusting according to need and bookings for each post but most important is for people to arrive at the scheduled time," he reaffirmed.



have been able to ascertain so far but we are still investigating," added Leong.

The number of cases detected at the different locations of their homes or workplaces has made the number of "red zones" of confinement grow to 11. These include the two buildings already mentioned, as well as the restaurant in Nam Van, the Lam Kei Roasted Meats store, the Parkway Mansion - Block 2 building, the Centro Chiu Fok at Rua de Pedro Coutinho and the Lake View Garden building in Macau, as well as the Flower City - Lei Pou Kok building in Taipa.

Centro Internacional de Macau at Rua de Malaca, Jardim Iat Lai building at Toi San and Man Lei building at Rua Dois do Bairro da Area Preta were added to the list at 8 p.m. last night.

Five other buildings in the surroundings are also considered under the "yellow zone" of confinement.

All 36 cases have been transferred to the Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane to undergo observation and treatment in isolation, Leong said.

ALMOST 1,000 PEOPLE BEING TRACED AS CONTACTS

At the same press briefing, Leong said that currently, some 941 people are being traced by the health authorities concerning the 36 confirmed cases. She indicated further that this figure might grow exponentially, since one of the confirmed cases, the wife of a prison

guard who also tested positive, is a teacher at the Hou Kong Primary School and has had contact with several classes of students from the school.

Additionally, the couple's daughter, also infected with the virus, attends kindergarten classes at the SHCC, leading the authorities to further investigate the K1 and K2 classes of this institution.

Questioned on the topic, Leong could not be precise about the number of people who may be put under further investigation by the authorities, but she hinted that it could amount to a few hundred.

"The wife of the prison guard is a teacher at the Hou Kong School - Primary section. As she is confirmed to be tested positive, the students are being put under observation. We are at the moment collecting more detailed information as to whether all the students will need to be quarantined or just some of them. Their child studies at Sacred Heart Kindergarten [SHCC] so all the staff need to be observed and potentially also those who frequented a study center she was attending as well," Leong said.

"For the Hou Kong [school], the number is quite high as the teacher deals with many students. We are doing a risk evaluation as this may involve a few hundred students. For the SHCC, I can't give a precise number, but it involves K1 and K2 classes that generally have about 30 students each," Leong added.



EDUCATION BUREAU REMINDS STUDENTS TO AVOID CONDUCTING PARALLEL TRADE

ANTHONY LAM

THE Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) expressed its concerns in a statement over the recent arrest of several students who were allegedly involved in parallel trading practices.

Last Thursday, Judiciary Police and the Macao Customs jointly announced that four students, aged between 14 and 16 years, had been apprehended in a counter-smuggling operation. The four teenagers – three male and a female – studied in the same school but did not know each other.

The law-enforcement agencies suspected that they were persuaded to smuggle used cell-phones and gadgets to mainland China by people within a syndicate through Chinese social media app WeChat.

The students were intercepted in the departure hall of the Border Gate Checkpoint.

According to the students' testimonies, they had been told to collect merchandise at a shop near the Border Gate before carrying them to Zhuhai. For every transfer, each one would be paid



260 Chinese yuan.

The DSEDJ said that it had contacted the school concerned to urge the school's management to improve moral education for its students. Furthermore, the bureau also pointed out that student counsellors have been deployed to provide assistance.

Schools have also been reminded to emphasize to students that under no circumstance

should they help any stranger carry things through immigration checkpoints. If students suspect they are being coerced, tempted or used to conduct illicit activities, they should say no immediately and report the matter to the police.

At the same time, students and parents were also reminded not to participate in illicit trading or cargo delivery. Parents

should educate their children about the criminal consequences from conducting parallel trading.

The bureau also recommended educators, parents and students contact counselors if they require mental support.

MAN SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS FOR SMUGGLING

A Chinese court of law re-

cently convicted a man of smuggling food through Macau and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

The judgment by the People's High Court of Guangdong Province is final and no appeal will be accepted.

Apart from the incarceration, the man will also need to pay a fine of 3.7 million Chinese yuan as part of the sentence for the smuggling crime valued at 60 million yuan, according to a report by local Chinese paper Macao Daily News.

The crime started in 2018, the court noted. The convicted man was found guilty of ordering Japanese food items, such as biscuits and fruit juice drinks in Hong Kong. The products would then be mailed to Macau before they were distributed to parallel traders to transport to Guangzhou.

In November 2020, the man was convicted of the same crime and received the same sentence from a lower provincial court. The latest sentence is the result of his appeal against the judgment by the lower court.

May falls slightly short from April in tourist arrivals

ANTHONY LAM

THE city has accommodated about 601,000 tourists in May, which was 1% short from the count in April, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) of the Macau government disclosed yesterday.

On year-over-year comparison, the drop amounted to about 30%, the DSEC added.

The average time a tourist remains in Macau was 0.7 days shorter than the same month a year ago. They stayed shorter than a day – 0.9 days to be exact – on average in May.

Although the average stay duration implies hotel or inn accommodation may not have been necessary, some tourists chose to stay at a hotel in Macau in May. However, they stayed on average only 2.1 days, which was 0.8 days shorter than the data



from a year ago.

Those who did not stay overnight in Macau spent on average 0.1 days in Macau.

Due to an entry ban that has been in place since approximately the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the city has not seen tourists from non-Greater Chinese countries.

On the other hand, mainland Chinese residents once again topped the list of most

popular source markets of tourists. About 176,000 mainland residents visited Macau in May; among these, 404,000 were residents of the Greater Bay Area.

Despite this, 32.3% less mainland tourists visited Macau in May 2022 compared with May 2021.

In May, 574,000 visitors entered Macau by land, which equated to a 25% drop year-over-year. Among them,

78.6% used the Border Gate Checkpoint and 13.3% used the Hengqin Border Checkpoint. A little more than 22,000 came by ferry and nearly 4,000 by air.

In the first five months of this year, the city has received slightly over 3 million visitors, nearly a 10% drop year-over-year. More people chose to stay overnight elsewhere, which amounted to a 27.3% rise year-over-year.

GOV'T REASSURES AVAILABILITY OF ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

THE local government has assured the public in a statement that supplies of essential commodities are ample, and has discouraged panic purchasing.

Availability of supplies has been checked with several supermarkets, a government economic taskforce said in yesterday's statement. The taskforce was also assured by retailers that they would increase orders of the most popular products, such as rice, canned and frozen food products.

The taskforce has also required local supermarkets to implement quantity limits on individual retail so as to stabilize supply. Retailers were also reminded to comply with health measures recommended by the

Health Bureau (SSM).

Even without replenishment, the stock of rice and cooking oil in Macau is sufficient for a month's supply. As of the taskforce's inspection, the city had 1.67 million kilograms of rice and 750,000 kilograms of edible oil.

By issuing the statement, the government means to assure local residents about the supply of vital products and hence discourage panic buying.

Price speculation and profiteering are also within the government's scope of regulation, the taskforce noted.

Macau residents have a history of panic buying items such as several dozen toilet rolls, on the occasion of natural disasters. **AL**



GAMING

Analysts expect 'near-zero' revenue while casino stocks plunge following outbreak

LYNZY VALLES

MACAUI'S casino stocks saw a plunge yesterday after the government's announcement of a new wave of Covid-19 cases dealt a fresh blow to the crippled gaming sector.

The outbreak that initially numbered 12 led to another city-wide mass testing, which increased the case tally up to 36.

This comes after eight months of the city recording zero Covid-19 cases among the local community.

When the Hong Kong stock exchange market closed yesterday, Wynn Macau led the plunge, which recorded a 3.38% drop, followed by Melco Resorts Entertainment with a decline of 3.26% and SJM Holdings with 3.16%.

MGM China and Sands China shadowed with a decline of 2.24% and 2.15% respectively, while Galaxy Entertainment Group dropped slightly by 0.98%.

The gaming sector has long

MDT ARCHIVE



been suffering from a slump in revenues as casinos burn millions of dollars of cash each day.

The past two months, the tumultuous industry suffered a revenue slump, recording the worst losses in 18 months in April, when gross gaming revenue (GGR) only reached MOP2.68 billion as Macau endured stricter border restrictions whenever fresh outbreaks arose in

neighboring regions.

This was followed in May when GGR dropped to MOP3.34 billion, the second worst figure since September 2020, the month when travel resumed for visitors from mainland China.

For JPMorgan Chase & Co analysts including DS Kim, Macau's GGR may hit "near-zero levels" for at least a few weeks until

the situation is under control.

With this scenario likely, the brokerage expects that SJM and Sands China will only have enough liquidity to survive until March next year.

Only Galaxy was expected to have enough cash for the next five years, according to the analysts, while other operators will have at most two years of liquidity.

The "unprecedented" Covid-19 outbreak, as what the government calls, has led to suspended operations of the majority of government offices as well as temporary closures of shops and schools.

Dining in at restaurants is also being discouraged.

Credit Suisse analysts, meanwhile, expect that the government could order a temporary suspension of casinos if the outbreak gets worse.

If this happens, this will become the second closure of casinos, after the first closure of 15 days, which occurred during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in February 2020.

"Players may choose not to come in the near term fearing they may not be able to return to their hometown if additional cases are discovered," said analyst Kenneth Fong.

The Covid-19 outbreak is already damaging the tourism sector as those arriving in Zhuhai from Macau are required to undergo a "7+7" quarantine.

AD

MAGNITUDE 6.0 EARTHQUAKE SHAKES CENTRAL TAIWAN COAST

A magnitude 6.0 earthquake shook Taiwan yesterday morning. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The quake struck at 9:05 a.m. at a depth of 6.8 kilometers in Hualien county, halfway down the east coast of the island, Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau said. It was felt across most of the island of 24 million people including to the north in Taipei, the capital. It was also felt across the Taiwan Strait in mainland China's Fujian province. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said.

CHINA SAYS IT SUCCESSFULLY INTERCEPTED A MISSILE IN FLIGHT

China says it has successfully intercepted a missile in flight, in a test of an anti-ballistic missile system that could improve its defenses as it presses its territorial claims. A brief statement from the Defense Ministry late Sunday gave no details, but said the test was purely defensive in nature and was not aimed at any foreign nations. Missiles are a major component of China's defense and are the backbone of its space program, which has launched astronauts and components to the nation's orbiting space station.

SCIENTISTS DEVELOPS NEW COATING FOR SPACECRAFT THERMAL CONTROL

Chinese scientists have developed a metallic-based thermal-control coating for the Shenzhou-14 crewed spaceship that will protect the taikonauts from extreme heat and cold during their six-month stay in orbit. The new coating works in two ways: providing low solar absorption to help reduce the sun's effect on the spacecraft's interior temperature; and providing low infrared emittance to block heat release from internal sources. Tasked with completing the construction of China's Tiangong space station, the orbiting Shenzhou-14 taikonauts will witness several complex station configurations during their six-month journey.

CHINA'S FIRST HORN OF AFRICA ENVOY OFFERS TO MEDIATE IN REGION

CHINA'S first special envoy to the Horn of Africa yesterday offered to mediate in disputes in the region as Beijing seeks to strengthen its influence and protect its investments from conflict.

"I myself am ready to provide mediation efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes based on the will of countries in this region," Xue Bing told a China-led peace conference in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

The strategic Horn of Africa region is anchored by Ethiopia, recently shaken by war that spread from its northern Tigray region. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed last week said the government doesn't want war anymore. He denied reports that negotiations were taking place with rival Tigray leaders but said a government committee would soon present a road map on the issue.

Ethiopian government spokesman Legesse Tulu didn't immediately respond Monday when asked if the government would take up China's mediation offer. Other mediation efforts have been pursued in recent months by the African Union, the United States and Kenya.

Others attending the China-led peace conference were foreign ministers or deputies from Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti. Notably absent was Eritrea, which teamed up with Ethiopia's forces in the Tigray conflict and was



China's first special envoy to the Horn of Africa, Xue Bing

among the African countries visited by China's foreign minister early this year. Eritrea's information minister didn't immediately respond when asked about the absence.

China's interests in the Horn of Africa include its first overseas military base, in Djibouti; oil investments in Sudan and South Sudan; manufacturing in Ethiopia; and a range of infrastructure projects.

The Chinese envoy in his speech noted "complicated and in-

tertwined ethnicity, religion and boundary issues" in the region and noted they can be "difficult to handle, as many of them date back to colonial times." China, like Russia, has stressed its lack of colonial activities in Africa to contrast with several European nations.

"Let us take our own share of responsibility for the failure (of regional peace) and commit ourselves to take the destiny of our region into our hands," Redwan Hussein, Ethiopia's national se-

curity adviser, told the conference, noting the interest in avoiding "unwarranted external interference and undue pressure." That was a theme of Ethiopia's pushback against criticism from some in the West over the Tigray conflict.

Ethiopia also has been at odds with neighboring Sudan over disputed land and Addis Ababa's construction of a huge and controversial Blue Nile dam that will be Africa's largest hydroelectric power plant. **MDT/AP**

THE iconic Jumbo Floating Restaurant capsized on Sunday after encountering adverse conditions while passing Xisha Islands in the South China Sea.

Water entered into the vessel before it began to tip.

The parent company of the restaurant, Aberdeen Restaurant Enterprises Limited (AREL) announced in a statement last night, that the water depth at the scene is over 1,000 meters, thus "making it extremely difficult to carry out salvage works."

"Despite the efforts of the towing company responsible for the trip to rescue the vessel, unfortunately it capsized on Sunday. No crew members were injured in the incident," the statement read.

It said that the company is "very saddened by this accident," adding that it is now getting further details of the accident from the

HONG KONG

Iconic Jumbo Restaurant capsizes in South China Sea



Hong Kong's iconic Jumbo Floating Restaurant is towed away in Hong Kong, last week

towing firm.

In accordance with regulations, professional

marine engineers were hired to thoroughly inspect the hull of the Jumbo Floa-

ting Restaurant and install hoardings to the vessel before its departure last week.

The trip had obtained all relevant approvals, according to AREL.

The landmark floating restaurant that fed Cantonese cuisine and seafood to Queen Elizabeth II, Tom Cruise and millions of other diners was towed from the Hong Kong harborfront last week after being closed by the pandemic.

It wasn't clear where it will berth next. The company's plan was to move it to a lower-cost site where maintenance could still be conducted.

The parent company of Jumbo Floating Restaurant couldn't find a new owner and lacked funds to maintain it after months of Covid-19 restrictions.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam had previously rejected suggestions to bail out the restaurant, despite calls from lawmakers to preserve the iconic landmark. **LV**

South Asia floods hampering access to food, clean water

JULHAS ALAM
& WASBIR HUSSAIN, DHAKA

DAYS of flooding are challenging authorities yesterday in South Asia as they try to deliver food and drinking water to shelters across submerged swaths of India and Bangladesh.

The high water brought on by seasonal monsoon downpours has already claimed more than a dozen lives, displaced hundreds of thousands and flooded millions of homes.

Those who remain in their homes can be seen wading through streets flooded up to their knees. In Sylhet, an eastern Bangladesh city on the Surma River, a man stands in the doorway of his flooded shop, where top shelves are crammed with things in an effort to keep them above water. Two women stand inside a flooded home lit only by the cloudy sky outside. Local TV said millions remained without electricity.

Enamur Rahman, junior minister for disaster and relief, said that up to 100,000 people have been evacuated in the worst-hit districts, including Sylhet. About 4 million people have been marooned in the area, the United News of Bangladesh said.



Flooding also continued to ravage India's northeastern Assam state where two policemen engaged in rescue operations were washed away by floodwaters Sunday, an official in the state capital Gauhati said.

Officials said nearly 200,000

people were taking shelter in 700 relief camps. Water levels in all major rivers across the state were flowing above danger levels.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said yesterday his administration was in the process of airlifting food and fuel by mili-

tary helicopters to some parts of the state that were badly affected.

Assam has been reeling from massive floods after heavy torrential rains over the past few weeks made the Brahmaputra River break its banks, leaving

millions of homes underwater and severing transport links.

The Brahmaputra flows from China's Tibet through India and into Bangladesh on a nearly 800-kilometer journey through Assam.

Major roads in Bangladesh have been submerged, leaving people stranded. In the country that has a history of climate change-induced disasters, many expressed their frustration that authorities haven't done more locally.

"There isn't much to say about the situation. You can see the water with your own eyes. Water level inside the room has dropped a bit. It used to be up to my waist," said Muhit Ahmed, owner of a grocery shop in Sylhet.

**Nearly
200,000
people were
taking shelter
in 700 relief
camps**

Bangladesh called in soldiers Friday to help evacuate people, but Ahmed has yet to see any of them firsthand.

"All in all, we are in a great disaster. Neither the Sylhet City Corporation nor anyone else came here to inquire about us," he said. "I am trying to save my belongings as much as I can. We don't have the ability to do any more now." **MDT/AP**

Australian leader refuses to publicly intervene on Assange

ROD MCGUIRK,
CANNBERRA

AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday rejected calls for him to publicly demand the United States drop its prosecution of WikiLeaks founder and Australian citizen Julian Assange.

The Australian government has been under mounting pressure to intervene since the British government last week ordered Assange's extradition to the United States on spying charges. Assange's supporters and lawyers say his actions were protected by the U.S. Constitution.

Albanese, who came to power at elections a month ago, declined to say whether he had spoken to President Joe Biden about the case.

"There are some people who think that if you



put things in capital letters on Twitter and put an exclamation mark, that somehow makes it more important. It doesn't," Albanese told reporters.

"I intend to lead a government that engages diplomatically and appro-

priately with our partners," Albanese added.

Attorney General Mark Dreyfus and Foreign Minister Penny Wong responded to the British government's decision by saying Assange's "case has dragged on for too long and ... should

be brought to a close."

They said they would continue to express that view to the U.K. and U.S. governments, but their joint statement fell short of calling for the United States to drop the case.

Assange supporters

calling for Australian government intervention include his wife Stella Assange.

"The Australian government can and should be speaking to its closest ally to bring this matter to a close," she told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Bob Carr, who was foreign minister when Albanese's center-left Labor Party was last in power in 2012 and 2013, wrote in an opinion piece in The Sydney Morning Herald yesterday that an Australian request to drop Assange's prosecution was "small change" in Australia's defense alliance with the United States.

American prosecutors say Assange helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

Carr noted that

Manning's sentence was commuted in 2017.

"It looks like one rule for Americans, another for citizens of its ally," Carr wrote.

Carr told AuBC that Assange going on trial in the United States would "ignite anti-Americanism in Australia in a way we haven't seen."

He said hostility to the Australian-American alliance wasn't "in the interests of either country."

Assange's lawyers plan to appeal, extending the process by months or even years.

His wife Stella Assange said her husband was being prosecuted for exposing war crimes and abuses of power.

"The only goal here is to free Julian because this has been going on since 2010. He's been in prison for over three years and the case against him is a travesty," Stella Assange said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Nobel Peace Prize winner Dmitri A. Muratov



Russian journalist sells Nobel Prize for Ukrainian children

BOBBY CAINA CALVAN,
NEW YORK

WHAT'S the price of peace? That question could be partially answered today (Macau time) when Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov auctions off his Nobel Peace Prize medal. The proceeds will go directly to UNICEF in its efforts to help children displaced by the war in Ukraine.

Muratov, awarded the gold medal in October 2021, helped found the independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta and was the publication's editor-in-chief when it shut down in March amid the Kremlin's clampdown on journalists and public dissent in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It was Muratov's idea to auction off his prize, having already announced he was donating the accompanying \$500,000 cash award to charity. The idea of the donation, he said, "is to give the children refugees a chance for a future."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Muratov said he was particularly concerned about children who have been orphaned because of the conflict in Ukraine.

"We want to return their future," he said.

He added that it's important international sanc-

tions levied against Russia do not prevent humanitarian aid, such as medicine for rare diseases and bone marrow transplants, from reaching those in need.

"It has to become a beginning of a flash mob as an example to follow so people auction their valuable possessions to help Ukrainians," Muratov said in a video released by Heritage Auctions, which is handling the sale but not taking any share of the proceeds.

Muratov shared the Nobel Peace Prize last year with journalist Maria Ressa of the Philippines.

The two journalists, who each received their own medals, were honored for their battles to preserve free speech in their respective countries, despite coming under attack by harassment, their governments and even death threats.

Muratov has been highly critical of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the war launched in February that has caused nearly 5 million Ukrainians to flee to other countries for safety, creating the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II.

Independent journalists in Russia have come under scrutiny by the Kremlin, if not outright targets of the government. Since Putin came into power more than

two decades ago, nearly two dozen journalists have been killed, including at least four who had worked for Muratov's newspaper.

In April, Muratov said he was attacked with red paint while aboard a Russian train.

Muratov left Russia for Western Europe on Thursday to begin his trip to New York City, where live bidding began yesterday.

The idea of the donation [...] 'is to give the children refugees a chance for a future.'

Online bids began June 1 to coincide with the International Children's Day observance. The live bidding falls on World Refugee Day.

As of Monday morning, the high bid was \$550,000. The purchase price is expected to spiral upward, possibly into the millions.

"It's a very bespoke deal," said Joshua Benesh, the chief strategy officer for Heritage Auctions. "Not everyone in the world has a Nobel Prize to auction and not every day of the week that there's a Nobel Prize crossing the auction block."

Since its inception in 1901, there have been nearly 1,000 recipients of the Nobel Prizes honoring

achievements in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and the advancement of peace.

The most ever paid for a Nobel Prize medal was in 2014, when James Watson, whose co-discovery of the structure of DNA earned him a Nobel Prize in 1962, sold his medal for \$4.76 million. Three years later, the family of his co-recipient, Francis Crick, received \$2.27 million in bidding run by Heritage Auctions, the same company that is auctioning off Muratov's medal.

Melted down, the 175 grams of 23-karat gold contained in Muratov's medal would be worth about \$10,000.

The ongoing war and international humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of those affected in Ukraine are bound to stoke interest, Benesh said, adding it's hard to predict how much someone would be willing to pay for the medal.

"I think there's certainly going to be some excitement," Benesh said. "It's its such a unique item being sold under unique circumstances [...] a significant act of generosity, and such a significant humanitarian crisis."

Muratov and Heritage officials said even those out of the bidding can still help by donating directly to UNICEF. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1982 PRINCESS DIANA GIVES BIRTH TO BOY



Diana, Princess of Wales, has given birth to a boy sixteen hours after checking in to St Mary's Hospital, in London.

The boy, who has been named William, was born at 21:03 BST, weighing 7lb 1½oz.

He is second in line to the British throne after his father the Prince of Wales, who accompanied Princess Diana to the hospital at 0500BST this morning and stayed with her throughout the day.

Outside the hospital crowds had gathered to wait for news of the birth, with some saying they would wait through the night if necessary. Flowers arrived all day long and were taken into the hospital.

Thousands also gathered outside Buckingham Palace, where the birth was formally announced.

The Queen had continued with her scheduled programme, inspecting the RAF regiment on their 40th anniversary at Wittering in Cambridgeshire.

A Palace official said she had looked "absolutely delighted" on hearing that the Princess had gone into labour.

The Princess went into labour earlier than expected, but only by a few days.

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at St George's Hospital Medical School in London, Geoffrey Chamberlain, told BBC News the long labour period should not present cause for concern.

He said: "Just over half of women expecting their first baby deliver inside 12 hours but another fifth go onto about 18 hours, and another fifth go even longer."

"There is nothing abnormal with a labour going into 24 hours."

The Queen's own surgeon gynaecologist, George Pinker, who has looked after the Princess throughout her pregnancy, was in charge of the delivery.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Prince William was the first heir to the British throne to be born in a hospital.

His brother, Prince Harry, was born on 15 September 1984.

Aged eight, William was sent to school in Wokingham, Berkshire, and at 13, he went to Eton, where he gained 12 GCSEs and excelled at a variety of sports.

After attaining A-Levels at grades A, B and C, he began a History of Art degree at Scotland's oldest university, St Andrews. He switched to Geography and achieved a 2:1 honours in his MA degree.

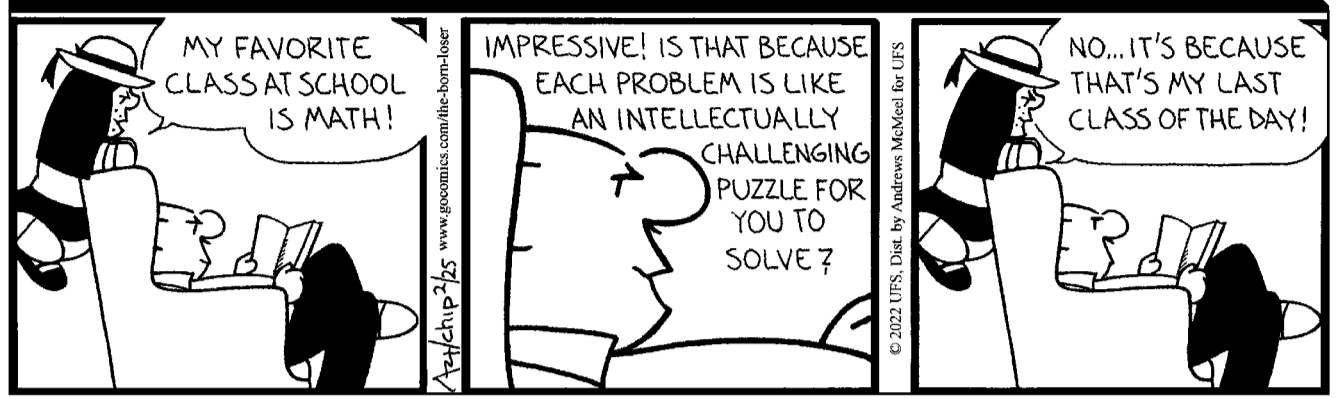
In 2006 the Prince joined the army, entering the officer training academy at Sandhurst.

The prince has had to endure the break up of his parents' marriage and the sudden death of his mother in August 1997.

YOUR STARS

<p>ARIES  Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You may experience setbacks due to additional responsibilities with loved ones. You may end up being blamed if anything goes wrong. Too much talk might lead to hassles.</p>	<p>TAURUS  Apr. 20-May. 20 Take time to listen to children and help them with projects that seem impossible to them. If you can't get away, make plans to do something special with friends or relatives.</p>
<p>GEMINI  May. 21-Jun. 21 Physical limitations are possible if you aren't careful. Friends may not be completely honest with you. Don't blame others for your own stubbornness.</p>	<p>CANCER  Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You are best to work behind the scenes on projects that require detail or precision. Do not invest in ventures that only appear to be lucrative. Keep tabs on your spending.</p>
<p>LEO  Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Take your time before making personal decisions. You will meet some interesting people if you attend promotional functions. Talk to peers who you trust in order to get sound advice.</p>	<p>VIRGO  Aug. 23-Sep. 22 You may have difficulties with someone close to you. Favors will be offered readily. Resist secret affairs that could be detrimental to your reputation.</p>
<p>LIBRA  Sep. 23-Oct. 22 You're in a high cycle for romance. Travel opportunities should be your first choice. Your boss may be pushy. Don't push your colleague's buttons today, or you may be in for a surprise.</p>	<p>SCORPIO  Oct. 23-Nov. 21 You will be in the mood for competition, and your ability to lead a group will bring you popularity. Visitors may drop by unexpectedly, resulting in tension with your lover.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS  Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Avoid too much discourse with colleagues today. Depression may be likely if you're away from home. Don't get involved in other people's problems.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN  Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You can complete any projects efficiently, especially if you put the effort in yourself. The only thing you'll accomplish is a bad reputation. Creative educational pursuits will payoff.</p>
<p>AQUARIUS  Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Your determination and stamina will make your work look flawless and effortless. You can get a lot done if you get your hands on the right equipment.</p>	<p>PISCES  Feb. 19-Mar. 20 This is a great day for a trip. You may be confused regarding your love life. Try to get out and socialize.</p>

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	36	cloudy
Changchun	21	29	cloudy
Chengdu	24	31	showers
Chongqing	25	35	cloudy
Fuzhou	25	30	rain
Guangzhou	26	31	thunderstorms
Guiyang	20	27	showers
Haikou	27	36	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	24	32	rain
Harbin	21	31	cloudy
Hefei	24	33	overcast
Nanjing	25	34	cloudy
Shanghai	24	31	overcast
Taipei	25	29	cloudy
Wuhan	24	32	rain
Hong Kong	28	30	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	12	16	rain
Frankfurt	15	28	overcast
Paris	17	26	rain
London	12	25	overcast
New York	17	27	showers

CROSSWORDS


ACROSS 1- Take place; 6- Open, as a gate; 11- IV units; 14- Now, in Nogales; 15- Sift; 16- On a roll; 17- Domestic cat; 18- Narrow street; 19- Pay stub?; 20- Olympic event; 22- Beastly; 24- Having three unequal sides; 28- Siouan speakers; 30- To a greater extent; 31- Without ___ in the world; 32- Upbeat, in music; 33- Adorn with too much formality; 37- ___-Cone; 38- Common chord; 39- Bee; Prefix; 40- Native of Budapest; 43- Assault; 45- Opposed to cation; 46- Three times; 47- Trust; 49- Ruled; 50- Seraglio; 51- Capital of the Ukraine; 52- Abbr. on a toothpaste box; 53- Hot spots; 56- Heron, usually white; 61- Watched the kids; 62- Noted Civil War biography; 63- Debris; 64- All for; 65- Conger catcher; 66- Nosh;

DOWN 1- Feedbag bit; 2- Chinese tea; 3- Corn holder; 4- Metro area; 5- Unlit; 6- Grammarian's concern; 7- The world's longest river; 8- ___ canto; 9- Hail, to Caesar; 10- Name given to the fox; 11- Elected; 12- Young male horses; 13- Hang around; 21- Numero ___; 23- Antiquing agent; 24- Shatter; 25- Horn-shaped bone; 26- Burning desire?; 27- Circle of flowers; 28- Body of salt water; 29- Reddish-brown gem; 31- Like a roc; 33- The Hunter; 34- Kind of kitchen; 35- Room; 36- Located; 38- Tom, Dick and Harry, e.g.; 41- Strong wind; 42- You don't bring me flowers, ___; 43- Trembles; 44- Unit of energy; 46- Driver's aid; 47- Radiolocation; 48- One of the Muses; 49- Stair part; 50- Clasp for a door; 51- Human leg joint; 54- Flight formation; 55- Building annex; 57- Firearm; 58- Narrow inlet; 59- SASE, e.g.; 60- Disapproving sound;

Yesterday's solution

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	



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FILM

'LIGHTYEAR' STAYS EARTHBOUND, 'JURASSIC WORLD' HOLDS NO. 1

LINDSEY BAHR

LIGHTYEAR did not go to infinity (or beyond) in its first weekend in theaters: Pixar's first major theatrical release since March 2020 blasted off with \$51 million in its debut weekend in North America, according to studio estimates on Sunday.

Not only did it open lower than expected, but it also failed to conquer "Jurassic World: Dominion," which held on to the first-place spot with \$58.7 million its second weekend.

It is a mixed bag for Disney and Pixar as "Lightyear," an origin story about the movie that inspired the space ranger action figure in the "Toy Story" movies, is one of the biggest launches for an animated family film over the pandemic. Including international showings, which grossed \$34.6 million, "Lightyear's" global opening weekend totals to \$85.6 million.

But expectations were higher for a release this high-profile and based on a beloved, well-known character. Going into the



weekend, some analysts had pegged "Lightyear" for a \$70 million North American debut.

"The expectations are always incredibly high for any Pixar movie, particularly one that has a direct connection to the Toy Story brand," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for box office tracker Comscore.

"Toy Story" launched Pixar in 1995 and its four films have made over \$3 billion. "Toy Story 3" and "Toy Story 4" also both broke the

\$1 billion mark.

The family audience has proved a little more reluctant than other segments to return to movie theaters. Many studios, including Disney and Pixar, have opted for streaming or hybrid releases for their animated titles. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the company has sent its Pixar titles — "Soul," "Luca," and "Turning Red" — directly to Disney+ free for subscribers. Disney's other big animated titles, "Raya and the

Last Dragon" and "Encanto" got hybrid releases.

"There may have been a little confusion about whether it's just in theaters," Dergarabedian said. "This is a movie that is going to have to be marketed in real time as family audiences connect the dots."

Critics were mostly favorable to "Lightyear," which features Chris Evans as Buzz Lightyear and a supporting voice cast that includes Keke Palmer and Taika Waititi. Di-

rected by Angus MacLane, it currently holds a 77% critics score on Rotten Tomatoes. Audiences gave it an A- CinemaScore.

With a reported production budget of \$200 million, which doesn't account for the millions spent on marketing and promotion, "Lightyear" has a long journey ahead of it to get to profitability. But it could also have a slow, steady burn over the summer. And it's the only big family offering playing in theaters until "Minions: The Rise of Gru" opens July 1.

"Lightyear" opened in 4,255 locations domestically and in 43 markets overseas. Thirteen nations from the Muslim world and the Palestinian territory barred "Lightyear" from playing in their cinemas because of the inclusion of a brief kiss between a lesbian couple.

"Jurassic World: Dominion," meanwhile, has now earned over \$622.2 million worldwide with \$259.2 million of that coming from U.S. and Canadian theaters. It's only the seventh movie released during the pandemic to surpass \$600 million.

In its fourth weekend, "Top Gun: Maverick" dropped only slightly, bringing in an additional \$44 million to take third place. Its domestic total is now at \$466.2 million. Globally, the high-flying sequel has grossed over \$885 million. **MDT/AP**

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EXPLAINER

Title IX update faces polarized challenges

EDDIE PELLIS

AT least 19 states now either bar or limit participation in sports by transgender athletes, who are at the center of a polarizing, politicized debate, even though only a fraction of them are believed to be among America's 8.5 million high school and college athletes.

Transgender athlete bans are being challenged in court and advocates on both sides are citing or pointing to Title IX, the landmark anti-discrimination law that has protected and helped girls and women since its passage in 1972.

As the 50th anniversary of Title IX approaches, an overview of the debate:

WHO IS AFFECTED?

For the purposes of the debate in sports, it has mostly to do with transgender girls or women who went through puberty without hormone treatment and continue to have male hormones in their bodies. This leads to what critics say is a sizable performance gap and unfair competition, even though research on this topic is often in dispute and still taking shape.

Many international sports now require athletes who want to compete in women's classifications but have certain high levels of testosterone to take gender-confirming hormones for a certain amount of time to be eligible. Perhaps the most prominent case involves South African star runner Caster Semenya, who decided against taking the hormones and missed out on the Tokyo Olympics because of it. Semenya is not transgender, but has what's known as 46 XY DSD condition.

As for how many transgender athletes are impacted by the sta-



te bans, there are no definitive numbers, though Associated Press reporting found the restrictions to be largely a solution in search of a problem.

WHAT ARE STATES DOING?

Most of the 19 states that have put restrictions on transgender athletes tend to vote conservative. Some governors have vetoed bills passed by Republican-controlled legislatures, arguing the laws are unfair to transgender females, will leave states and their school districts vulnerable to lawsuits, and that no problem actually exists. Indiana and Utah are among the states that have overridden their governor's vetoes.

Transgender athletes in states

with bans can challenge then in court or sit out. Some of the legislation calls for what can only be described as invasive proof for an athlete to compete; in Ohio, proposed language said "if a participant's sex is disputed" a doctor would need to sign off on the athlete's "internal and external reproductive anatomy" as well as testosterone levels and overall genetic makeup.

In other states, high school athletic associations allow transgender females to compete in girls sports. That has led to a court fight in Connecticut, where a group of cisgender high school athletes said allowing transgender athletes to compete deprived them of track titles and scholarship opportunities. Their

attorney, Christiana Holcomb, said the rule "is completely at odds with Title IX" and "reverses nearly 50 years of advances for women."

The flip side? A lawsuit filed in Florida argues that the state's ban on transgender athletes participating in girls sports violates Title IX.

WHAT IS THE NCAA'S STANCE ON ALL THIS?

Earlier this year, the NCAA said it would set aside its old policy — which was consistent across all sports in requiring transgender athletes to undergo hormone therapy — and adhere to the rules set by each sport's national governing body.

The NCAA then decided not

to adopt USA Swimming's rules, which made it possible for transgender swimmer Lia Thomas of Penn to compete at the national championships in March, where she won the 500-yard title.

CAN TITLE IX SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

Title IX was written long before the debate about transgender athletes became such a political football, even before transgender tennis player Renee Richards sued to play and certainly before Olympic champion Caitlyn Jenner transitioned.

The law's landmark clause — "No person shall, on the basis of sex" — is subject to different interpretation than it was in 1972. In 2022, the question essentially boils down to whether it includes gender identity. Under President Joe Biden, the Education Department made clear that it does.

A year ago, the agency issued a statement that said "addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity" is within its responsibility "to enforce Title IX's prohibition on sex discrimination." Whether something more substantial is on the way was unclear.

In an analysis, The National Law Review said it is "clear that congressional action may be required to provide a firmer foundation for these protections."

Don't hold your breath: The single piece of federal legislation that attempts to bring clarity to the issue was sponsored by a Republican and has not gone anywhere in Congress. Democrats have largely supported the Equality Act, which would enshrine many rights for the LGBTQ community but would not impact Title IX. **MDT/AP**

Japan to host east zone playoffs in Asian Champions League

THE Asian Champions League playoffs in the eastern zone are set to be staged in Japan in August.

The Asian Football Confederation yesterday said the Round of 16 matches would be played Aug. 18 and 19, the quarterfinals on Aug. 22 and the semifinals on Aug. 25.

Saitama will host the Round of 16 matches with Daegu FC against South Korean rival and two-ti-

me champion Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, BG Pathum United of Thailand against Hong Kong-based Kitchee SC, Vissel Kobe against Yokohama F Marinos in an all-Japan match and Johor Darul Ta'zim of Malaysia taking on two-time ACL winners Urawa Red Diamonds.

The western zone knockout stages will be held Feb. 3-10 next year at a central venue. The win-

ners of the eastern and western zones will meet in a home-and-away finals series on Feb. 19 and 26.

The AFC took the decision in January to revise the dates of the continental club championship because of COVID-19-related travel restrictions in some countries and the scheduling of the Nov. 21—Dec. 18 World Cup in Qatar. **MDT/AP**



OPINION

World Views

Amanda Mascarelli, The Conversation

AT LAST, COVID-19 SHOTS FOR LITTLE KIDS - 5 ESSENTIAL READS

For many parents of kids under age 5, a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine could not come soon enough. A full year and a half after shots first became available for adults, their wait is nearly over.

On June 17, 2022, the Food and Drug Administration authorized both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 shots for the nearly 20 million U.S. children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years. The widely anticipated decision follows a unanimous recommendation in favor of the shots by the FDA's independent advisory panel.

1. 'Kids aren't just littler adults'

As the delta variant raged across the country in the summer of 2021, parents of kids under age 12 were anxiously awaiting the availability of a safe and effective COVID-19 shot for that age group. The FDA's authorization for ages 5 to 11 finally came in October 2021. But that still left the preschool and younger kids waiting for their own version of the vaccine.

2. So you get a shot, then what?

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned a lot of once-obscure biology terms such as mRNA, spike proteins and "waning antibodies" into household words. Yet for all the talk of vaccines and immunology, few people have a deep understanding of just what exactly happens once a vaccine is injected into the body.

When the body encounters the molecules in a COVID-19 vaccine – which mimics the SARS-CoV-2 virus – it activates an intricate and coordinated set of cells and processes. It's a lot like an elaborate construction zone. Some of these cells alert the body to the invader and recruit helpers, flagging the invader with signals akin to "flashing neon yellow signs."

3. Training the immune system

As clinical trials of COVID-19 shots for children under age 5 crawled along in early 2022, the omicron variant gained a firm foothold in the U.S. While serious cases of COVID-19 remain relatively rare in children, hospitalizations in kids under 5 increased dramatically due to the heightened transmissibility of omicron, highlighting the urgent need for a safe vaccine in that age group.

Debbie-Ann Shirley, a pediatrician specializing in infectious diseases at the University of Virginia, wrote in March 2022 about the painstaking process of performing clinical trials sequentially for each descending age group.

4. The inevitable booster shot question

In the fall of 2021, a mounting body of data from adults and adolescents found that immunity from COVID-19 vaccines and infections was waning over time, suggesting that booster shots would be needed – especially in the face of omicron. The same trends proved true for the 5 to 11 age group, though vaccination continued to provide strong protection against severe COVID-19 that leads to hospitalization. So in May 2022, the CDC recommended a booster dose for 5- to 11-year-olds.

COVID-19 shots for infants and preschoolers are expected to follow a similar trajectory; Pfizer's COVID-19 shots for kids under age 5 are intended to be a three-dose series. Moderna's testing of the third dose is still underway.

5. Helping kids overcome fear of shots

While the wait for COVID-19 vaccines for young children has undoubtedly been excruciating for some parents, so might be their conversations with children who have serious anxiety over getting a shot.

Validate their feelings by telling them you know needles can be a bit scary, but then reassure them that they can handle it. Explain why they're receiving vaccines and emphasize it is for their overall good."

[Abridged]

Cooler temperatures helped firefighters yesterday stabilize a wildfire in northwestern Spain that reports say is the biggest on record in the country.

The fire in the Sierra de Culebra mountain range in Zamora province has burnt 31,000 hectares so far. The state news agency Efe said that made it the biggest on record since a fire in southwestern Huelva province razed just under 30,000 hectares in 2004.

While the Zamora fire wasn't under complete control, there are no longer flames and it's no longer spreading, authorities said.

A drop in soaring temperatures allowed for about 650 firefigh-

ters supported by water-dumping aircraft to establish a perimeter around the fire that started Wednesday. People from 18 villages had to be evacuated over the past week.

Elsewhere, 900 people were evacuated from 13 villages in the northern region of Navarra where two wildfires were still active.

In Germany, heavy showers yesterday helped largely extinguish two big forest fires about 20 kilometers apart to the southwest of Berlin. Officials said hundreds of people were able to return to their homes after being evacuated as a precaution over the weekend. Roads also were reopened.



BITCOIN-BOOSTING SALVADORAN LEADER ASKS FOR PATIENCE

EL Salvador's Bitcoin-boosting president has asked people to be patient after the price of the cryptocurrency fell below \$20,000 — less than half the price the government paid.

According to the tracking site nayibtracker.com, El Salvador under President Nayib Bukele's administration has spent about \$105 million on Bitcoin, starting last September and paying an average of almost \$46,000 per coin.

The value of that investment in the currency, also known as "BTC," is now calculated to have fallen by over 57%, or around \$61 million.

"I see that some people are worried or anxious about the #Bitcoin market price," Bukele wrote in his Twitter account late Saturday. "My advice: stop looking at the graph and enjoy life. If you invested in #BTC your investment is safe and its value will immensely grow after the bear market."

"Patience is the key," the president wrote.

Last week, when a Bitcoin publication crowed that El Salvador has lost "only" \$40 million on its investment, Bukele tweeted with apparent incredulity: "You're telling

me we should buy more #BTC?"

Bukele became the first leader in the world to make the cryptocurrency legal tender last year and was a devoted booster at least up to May, when he boasted of "buying the dip" in the currency's price. But the coin has slid further since then.

Finance Minister Alejandro Zelaya sought to put a good face on the situation last week in an interview with a local television station, saying that because El Salvador hasn't sold any of its Bitcoins, it hasn't really suffered any loss.

"When they tell me that El Salvador's budgetary risk has increased because of the supposed loss, that loss doesn't exist," Zelaya said. "That must be made clear, because we have not sold."

However, most companies and governments do write down the value of what accountants call an "unrealized loss," even if they don't sell the distressed asset.

Zelaya also insisted the Bitcoin slide doesn't matter very much for El Salvador, saying that "this doesn't even represent 0.5% of our budget."

That might prove a hard sell in a country whe-

re about one-fifth of the people live on less than \$5.50 per day.

In January, El Salvador rejected a recommendation by the International Monetary Fund to drop Bitcoin as legal tender.

Zelaya said at the time that "no international organization is going to make us do anything, anything at all," calling it an issue of "sovereignty."

The IMF recommended that El Salvador dissolve the \$150 million trust fund it created when it made the cryptocurrency legal tender and return any of those unused funds to its treasury.

The IMF cited concerns about the volatility of Bitcoin prices, and the possibility of criminals using the cryptocurrency.

Bukele has touted Bitcoin as a way to significantly increase financial inclusion, drawing millions of people who previously lacked bank accounts into the financial system. He has also spoken of the parallel tourism promotion targeting Bitcoin enthusiasts.

Bukele led the push to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender alongside the U.S. dollar. El Salvador's Legislative Assembly made the country the first to do so in June 2021. MDT/AP

German government said yesterday that it remains committed to its goal of phasing out coal as a power source by 2030, despite deepening worries about a cut in Russia's gas supplies. Russia's Gazprom announced last week that it was sharply reducing supplies through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany for what it said were technical reasons. The German government says the move appears to be politically motivated.



France Far-right leader Marine Le Pen said yesterday that her party's extraordinary surge in the country's parliamentary election is a "historic victory" and a "seismic event" in French politics. Many voters in Sunday's poll opted for far-right or far-left candidates, denying President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance a straight majority in the National Assembly.



UK Unions and train companies in Britain are set to hold last-minute talks amid fading hopes of averting the country's biggest rail strikes for decades. Up to 40,000 cleaners, signallers, maintenance workers and station staff are due to walk out for three days this week, on today, tomorrow and Saturday, in a dispute over pay and job security at a time of soaring inflation.



Sports World swimming's governing body has effectively banned transgender women from competing in women's events, starting yesterday. FINA members widely adopted a new "gender inclusion policy" on Sunday that only permits swimmers who transitioned before age 12 to compete in women's events. The organization also proposed an "open competition category."