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**THE GOV'T AND CASINO OPERATORS SIGNED A DEAL TO EXTEND THE CURRENT GAMING LICENSES TO DECEMBER 31**

**WHO CONSIDERS DECLARING MONKEYPOX A GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCY**

**A LOCAL CATERING ASSOCIATION SAYS MOST RESTAURANTS HAVE COMPLIED WITH THE CALL TO DISCOURAGE PATRONS DINING IN**

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# LIASONS AT STAKE



**New Zealand** A man wounded four people in a stabbing rampage stopped by bystanders who brought him to the ground in a New Zealand city neighborhood yesterday, police said. Police District Commander Naila Hassan said the attack in Auckland was random and the suspect was in custody. She said there was no indication the attack was a hate crime, as the victims were of different genders, ethnicities and ages.



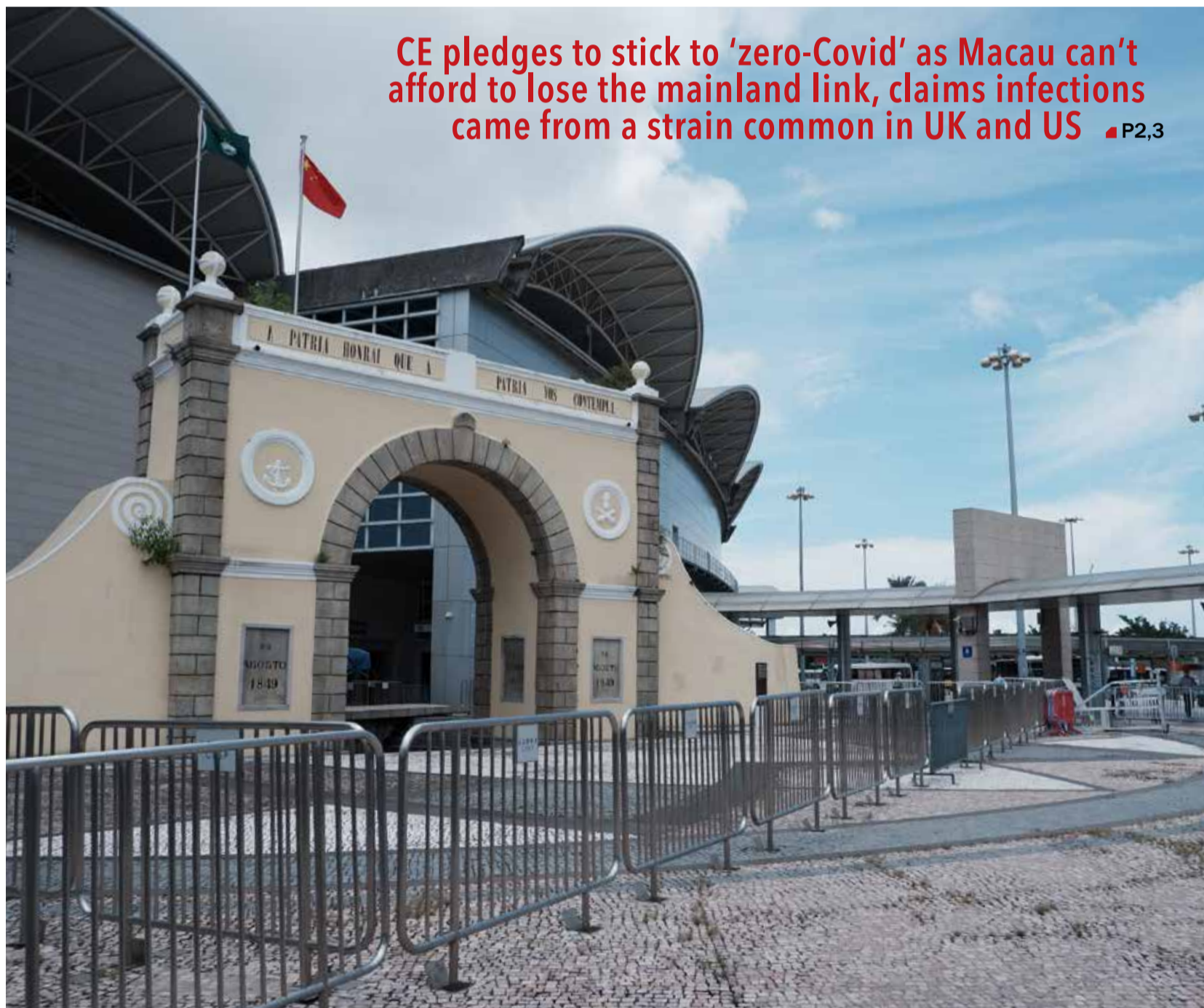
**Indian** officials began talks yesterday with Sri Lankan leaders on economic assistance, a day after Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe announced the country's economy had "collapsed." Sri Lankans have endured months of shortages of food, fuel and other necessities due to the country's dwindling foreign exchange reserves and mounting debt, worsened by the pandemic and other longer term troubles.



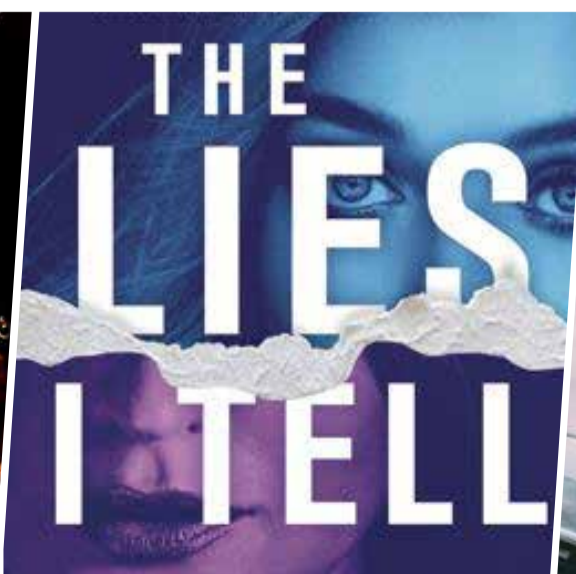
**Iraq's** Parliament swore in new lawmakers yesterday, replacing 73 legislators who resigned collectively earlier this month amid a prolonged political impasse over the formation of the country's next government. The walkout by followers of Iraq's most influential Shiite politician, Muqtada al-Sadr, threw Iraq into further uncertainty, reshuffling the deck following the Oct. 10 elections, which gave the cleric the biggest bloc in Parliament.

More on backpage

FLORA TANG



**CE pledges to stick to 'zero-Covid' as Macau can't afford to lose the mainland link, claims infections came from a strain common in UK and US** P2,3



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COVID-19 OUTBREAK

# CE CLAIMS THAT INFECTIONS CAME FROM A STRAIN COMMON IN UK, US

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE recent local outbreak of Covid-19 may be a strain of the virus coming from abroad, the Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng said yesterday during a special press conference organized by the government to announce the latest pandemic measures and updates.

According to the CE, the recent cases, amounting to 110 at the time of the press conference, were identified as the BA.5.1 strain of the Omicron variant. This strain, Ho said, is not common in China but is common in the U.S. and the U.K.

"We have found that the strain we have in Macau is the Omicron BA.5.1. In China, this is not a common strain but [...] it's more common in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This means that the search for the source of this outbreak is far more complex and difficult," the CE said. He added that this strain is very quick to cause infection and can spread easily, but it is also known to cause less significant symptoms and complications, and is easier to recover from.

"It has a high transmissibility but, in terms of the threat to human lives, is not as serious as other strains, so the population can remain relatively more relaxed," Ho said. The CE added that the government's measures in

enforcing mandatory closures of several types of businesses have to do with the high transmissibility of the virus and were enacted in a bid to prioritize the safety of the people.

According to official information published by the Beijing medical journal "China CDC (Center for Disease Control) Weekly," the first case of the Omicron variant BA.5.1 in China was reported on May 13 this year in Shanghai.

An epidemiological investigation traced the virus to a flight arriving in the Chinese city from Amsterdam on April 27.

The viral strain was detected in a 37-year-old Chinese passenger who had previously been in Uganda and had also had a transit in Seoul days before.

The virus was detected during the quarantine period on April 29 and, after treatment, the patient was discharged on May 12.

According to the same official source, several infections with the same strain have been found, with links to South Africa, Germany, Belgium and Hong Kong.

## COLD CHAIN IS A POSSIBILITY, HO SAYS

While suggesting that the outbreak's origin might not be related to the mainland, the CE stressed that authorities are keen to find the outbreak's source as well as any cases that might be hidden in the community.

"We are not [waiting] with our arms crossed. Quite the opposite, we are trying to find the source as fast as we can. Maybe it came from the cold chain, but we also don't know that for sure. But [the source being] China is not that plausible because it is not a strain that is common in China," Ho said.

Nonetheless, in response to several inquiries from the media, he also said that it was too early for any explanation to be ruled out.

"The strain is more common in [the U.K. and U.S.] than in China but I have not discarded any possibilities yet. It could be anything at this point. We need to continue to search to ensure [we find] the origin," Ho said, adding, "according to China's experience, it might also come through the mail or parcel shipping, so until we find the real cause we cannot discard any possibility."

One potential source already ruled out is the 16-year-old resident who recently returned

from abroad. According to media sources, this resident is one of the people infected with the virus, which was discovered just two days after he concluded his quarantine period.

According to the CE and Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong, given the timeline, it is not possible that this teenager is the source of the outbreak since there is evidence that this strain is detectable just a few days after infection. Additionally, the first person was reportedly infected on or around June 16, at which time the youngster was still undergoing medical observation.

According to Ao Ieong, the incubation period for this strain of the virus is between two and three days. This, she says, justifies the high frequency of nucleic acid tests (NAT) and rapid antigen tests (RAT) requested by authorities as well as the short time between the two rounds of citywide mass testing.

"This is why we decided to

continue to test. It is possible that from one day to another a person that tested negative can turn positive and our goal is tracing back these cases immediately before there is spread," Ao Ieong said. She added that, on Wednesday, authorities "found 15 cases using the NAT for specific groups and another 26 using the RAT. We need to continue to test to stop this chain of transmission."

In positive news, the same official noted that, in the cases being detected, there is a high CT (cycle threshold) value, which indicates that all these people are in the early stage of the infection. This is "good news," according to Ao Ieong, for preventing wider spread.

In response to a media inquiry on how an outbreak could possibly have originated from frozen food products, the CE explained that it is impossible for authorities to test every package of imported goods.

He explained that current practice is the collection of regular samples from arriving goods to minimize risk, but there is always a possibility of transmission through the cold chain, mail, parcels or luggage arriving in Macau from a returnee or any other situation that is somehow missed by disinfection procedures.

## WE CORRECT

In regard to the Macau Daily Times article titled "Gov't to run another – shorter – round of mass NAT" published yesterday, Jun.23, in our newspaper, we clarify that the ongoing mass testing will last until 12 a.m. Jun. 25, and not at 12 noon of

today, Jun. 24, as initially written in the article.

The correction was promptly made on our online edition yesterday morning.

For this unfortunate but honest error, we sincerely apologize to our readers.

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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\_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNER\_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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS\_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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ZERO-COVID POLICY

# CE: Macau can't afford to lose mainland link

RENATO MARQUES

**M**ACAU needs to continue adhering to the national zero-Covid strategy otherwise it will risk losing support from the mainland and jeopardize established border agreements, the Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng said yesterday in response to a media inquiry during a government special press conference.

"If we don't keep this 'zero case' policy, I don't know if we going to be able to keep our borders open to the mainland and this will surely have a great impact on Macau," the CE said. He added that if the zero-Covid policy is not maintained, "we won't have the borders open, we won't have tourists coming and we cannot revitalize the economy. We must find a balance between the economy and society. We need to see what the best option is for Macau because if we abandon the Chinese market, in which market can we find support for the economy? Without the Chinese market, I don't know how we can survive."

Ho's response came after he was asked to comment on the views of those in the population who are calling for an abandon-

RENATO MARQUES



ment of the zero-Covid policy and, instead, adoption of a policy of living with Covid-19, seen in many countries in Europe and the Americas.

At the same time, Ho rejected the idea of a citywide lockdown, noting that there are reasons to believe that the current situation will not be prolonged.

"We are hopeful that we will be able to contain the outbreak effectively so, for now, we will

not entertain the possibility of enforcing a citywide lockdown," the CE said. He explained that a team of specialists, including China's National Health Commission, is working on a model to help predict the evolution of the outbreak.

"This new [sixth] round of mass testing for the whole population will provide important data for this team of experts so they can produce a pandemic

evolution model that will help us to understand how long we need to enforce these measures," Ho said. He added, "I think that if we can comply with these measures of prevention and control, this situation will not last long."

The measures announced yesterday, and published in an executive order, shut down all entertainment, sport and leisure venues from 5 p.m. with the aim of stopping the outbreak in the

community.

The CE also mandated the suspension of dining in for all restaurants and bars as these venues, where patrons cannot wear face masks, are higher risk.

As for the closure of casinos, Ho said that, for the time being, there are no reasons to enforce such an "extreme" measure that would have an immediate negative effect on local workers' "bread winning."

## Gov't explains 'community zero-Covid' target

ANTHONY LAM

**C**OMMUNITY zero-Covid, in summary, is the goal of cutting off all transmission links within the general public, pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM), explained yesterday.

In the past couple of days, government officials, including Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng himself, have started using the term with increased frequency. Some people on social media have expressed unfamiliarity with the term.

In response to a question by the Times on the definition, Lo explained that the core meaning of the term centers around whether a positive case, when detected, is among the public or has been brought under control.

"Under control," the medical doctor further explained, refers to whether the person is in medical or observational quarantine. The location can be a bui-

ANTHONY LAM



lding in a red zone, a quarantine hotel or a medical facility.

If the positive case is detected while in quarantine, it will not affect the "community zero-Covid" target, because the case is not active within the community. The resulting infection will also pose low transmission risk.

On the other hand, if the case is found within the

community, "we will have to assume a chain of infection exists," Lo said.

He added that, during the early phase of an outbreak, there will be many cases in the community. However, as more positive cases are placed in quarantine, the number will gradually drop.

"This is why we want to cut off the chain of transmission as soon as possib-

le," Lo concluded.

Yesterday, the CE took some time during his own press conference to urge calm, saying that although the virus is spreading fast, this variant is not as impactful on health as other variants.

However, the government's reaction and performance in the past week has led to different perceptions. Mild panic buying of

necessities and claims that Macau would enter a complete lockdown were seen online and offline.

When questioned about whether the measures imposed contradicted the government's assurances, Lo urged people to not be overly worried. The best action, in his opinion, is to stop crowds gathering. "It will massively [benefit] the control of this current ou-

tbreak," the medical doctor added.

On the question of whether citywide SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test (NAT) and rapid antigen testing (RAT) will become regular features, the medical doctor said that the SSM has prepared many contingencies and measures.

"On whether, when and the order in which they will be implemented, we will need to rely on the latest data [before making a decision]," the medical doctor remarked. "Our measures have succeeded in detecting positive cases."

He also applauded local people for growing accustomed to the citywide NAT, "because, as per our data, progress has been smooth so far," the medical doctor said. He added that the question of whether there will be further rounds of citywide NAT or RAT will be determined by the results of the current NAT round, set to end midnight on June 25.

Lo confirmed, in reply to a question, that all cases have contracted the BA.5.1 viral strain.

### AIR MACAU'S REVENUE SURGES TO MOP1.2B IN 2021

Local flag carrier Air Macau has recorded a revenue increase to MOP1.2 billion in 2021, citing the partial recovery of the tourism market compared to 2020, when the city experienced its first wave of a tourism drought. Annual visitors in 2021 arrivals rose by 30.7% year-on-year to 7,705,943. Of these arrivals, some 501,387 traveled by air. In a statement made to the Official Gazette, the carrier said that it recorded a net loss of MOP771 million, MOP269 million less than in the previous year.

### IAS OPENS SUMMER SHELTER FOR PUBLIC

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) announced that its summer shelter opened to the public yesterday due to a yellow hot weather alert issued by the Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau. The shelter is located at Rua Leste da Ilha Verde, Edifício do Bairro da Ilha Verde. Residents must take a rapid test and return a negative result before entering the shelter. The IAS reminded the public to pay attention to elderly people who live alone and are staying at home, and take appropriate measures to prevent heatstroke.

### 63 ILLEGAL WORKERS IDENTIFIED IN MAY

Macau authorities identified a total of 63 illegal workers in the city during operations carried out in May. A total of 333 inspection operations were carried out last month, with 63 illegal workers identified on construction sites, in private buildings and commercial or industrial establishments. Since the beginning of the year, 1,706 inspections have been carried out and 276 illegal workers have been identified.

ANTHONY LAM

**A**N alleged violation during the mandatory quarantine triggered by the current Covid-19 outbreak was confirmed at the now daily health press conference yesterday.

Near the end of the press conference, the panel of officials were questioned whether they were aware of people in quarantine at the Sheraton hotel allegedly breaking rules.

They were reported to have opened their doors for a longer period than needed when getting their food. They were also said to have ordered food from outside the hotel that was delivered to their room.

Videos seen by the Times show a man sitting on a small chair in the doorway of a hotel room, with a small coffee table or luggage bench next to the door.

The man is seen smoking, with the door wide open. A glass and a bottle of alcohol, believed to be brandy or cognac, are also visible in front of him.

Another video shows someone throwing something from one room to the opposite room. According to the caption of the video, this is believed to be a can of beer.

Health officials have reiterated that quarantine is needed to break the chain of transmission by detecting positive cases.

In response to the question, public health doctor Leong Iek Hou, division head at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, confirmed that sending supplies into quarantine hotels for guests has been permitted in the past two years or so.

"However, we have regulated the type of materials to be delivered and the frequency of delivery,"

## QUARANTINED ACCUSED OF CONTACT BETWEEN ROOMS



Alleged violator seen smoking with door wide open

Leong added. "We only allow one delivery per day, which is conducted during specific hours. Food items that spoil [easily] are also not allowed."

In addition, the public health official said that guests in quarantine are permitted to open their doors briefly to receive food, which is delivered three times a day and placed on chairs or coffee tables outside their doors.

"They should also wear masks

properly when they get their food," Leong added. "I'm not certain whether the cases you reported have opened their doors to pick up food or otherwise."

Meanwhile, Liz Lam Tong Hou, division head for public relations at the Macao Government Tourism Office, said that the Sheraton hotel had been ordered to produce a report on the matter.

Passing materials from one room to another poses risks of

transmission, because the objects can transmit the virus.

After the press conference ended, the panel of officials hurried away from the event venue. As they were leaving, Health Bureau director Alvis Lo, who was near the front of the group, turned back and called for Leong to "discuss it." It was unclear whether the officials planned to discuss the alleged violations or other topics related to disease control.

## Catering association: majority of F&B operators heed gov't discouragement of dining in

STAFF REPORTER

**A** local catering association says most restaurants have complied with the government's call to discourage patrons dining in.

Aeson Lei, president of the Macau Catering Industry Association, stated that residents have mainly been using online food platforms, which have had little impact on business for restaurants that only provide takeaway service.

However, the restaurants severely impacted by the restrictions are mostly Chinese restaurants with regular customers.

Yesterday, the Chief Executive ordered that all entertainment venues be clo-



sed and food establishments cease providing dine-in services.

This edict was much clearer than Sunday's announcement, which sta-

ted merely that restaurants were encouraged to provide only takeaway service, which confused some residents.

Sunday's announcement followed the news that 12

coronavirus cases had been recorded, a figure that has now increased to 110.

In a Lusa report, food delivery company Mfood has already reported a surge of

up to 20% in the number of delivery orders made since Sunday. A further increase is expected in light of the new decree.

The order will remain in place until the Chief Executive decides to lift the ban.

Lam Man Chi, representing the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau, claimed in a TDM Forum that supplies are not sufficient in locked-down areas, expressing concerns that food may not be properly distributed to each household.

Lam expressed hope that the government will do better in making practical arrangements and providing more support to vulnerable groups.

# Macau Dome quarantine facility to commence operations today

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE temporary quarantine facility at the Macau East Asian Games Dome will replace the similar facility at the Taipa Maritime Terminal from 6 a.m. today, the local health chief said yesterday.

At the regular health press briefing pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM), announced that, due to an expected rise in the number of people requiring quarantine, the Taipa facility will reach capacity in the foreseeable future.

As the Macau Dome – now a makeshift hospital – is established, the bureau has decided that, from 6 a.m. today, the provisional quarantine station located at the Taipa terminal will suspend operations.

At the same time, the same facility located in Hall C of the Macau Dome will start operating. The new facility is spread across two floors, in contrast to the current venue which only has a single floor.

The decision was also made according to the mass outbreak contingency plan that was com-



ANTHONY LAM

led and publicized by the government earlier this year.

The facility at the Taipa terminal has been in use so people arriving in Macau via the airport can be transported there to have their samples collected for a coronavirus nucleic acid tests (NAT), before being sent to appropriate quarantine facilities.

From June 18 to 3 p.m. yesterday, the city has detected 110 positive cases. According to the health chief, all cases were in sta-

ble clinical condition as of yesterday and no severe symptoms had developed.

The ages of the cases range from eight months to 89 years. Eighteen of them have not received any Covid-19 vaccination, seven have received only one dose, 29 have received two doses and 46 have received three doses.

The SSM has separated the 110 cases into five clusters. Fifty-five are connected to the Im Lai Building, 38 to the Tat Cheong Build-

ing, four to the Tim Fung Laundry Shop, three to the OD Health Club and two to the International Center in Porto Exterior. The remaining eight people are still having their epidemiologist conditions evaluated.

All but the fourth cluster are connected, Lo revealed.

A medical staff member at the public hospital's special A&E service has tested positive. The person works as a secretion sample collector at the facility. For the

time being, no symptoms are reported.

As of yesterday, no other staff members at the facility has tested positive. The SSM were still investigating the source of infection.

Due to the recent outbreak, the government announced yesterday that it has decided to change the criteria for identifying red and yellow zones, public health doctor and SSM official, Leong Iek Hou, revealed.

In accordance with the new criteria, residential buildings will only be identified as a red zone when two positive cases are identified inside. Those with a single case will only be identified as a yellow zone.

Leong added that those properties currently zoned as red will be converted to yellow if there is only a single positive case, in combination with negative NAT results from all people living in the building.

Health officials also said that they did not find any conclusive evidence of violations at two wedding banquets believed to have been attended by positive cases on or before June 18. The banquets were held at the Grand Lisboa Palace Resort and the Grand Hyatt hotel.

Claiming that it was not able to identify all guests who had attended the banquets, the government was, as of the time of the press conference, still calling for attendees to contact the SSM.

## GAMING

# Casino contracts extension inked

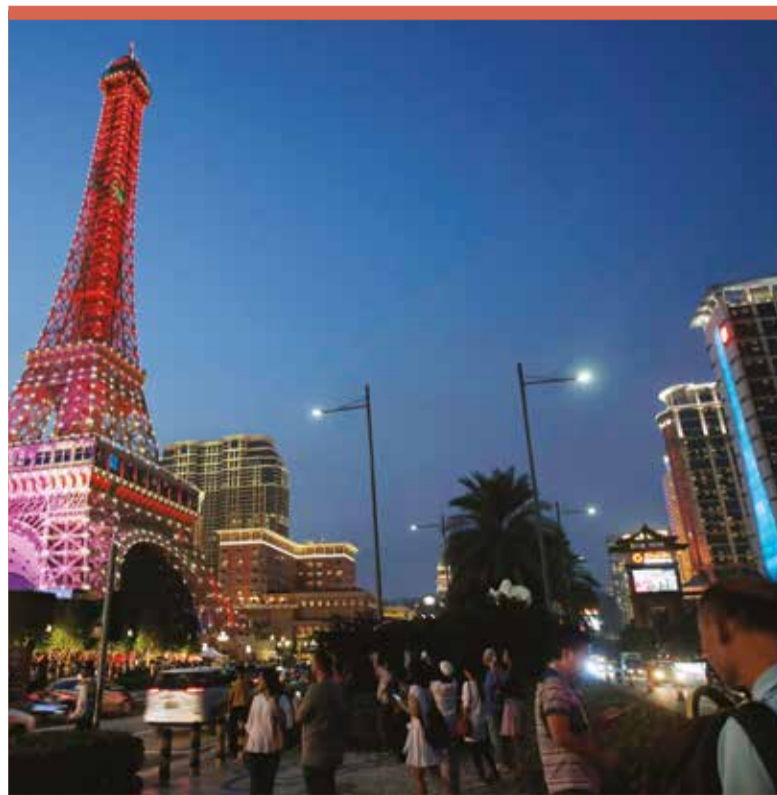
**Y**ESTERDAY the government and casino concessionaires signed a deal to extend the current gaming licenses to December 31 this year. The CE announced this news at a special press conference on the Covid-19 situation, confirming that the extension of the contracts would be signed later that afternoon.

Ho also reiterated that this extension, valid until December 31, would be the last.

"From January 1 [2023] we will enforce the new law and the new rules for the casino concessionaires. The government will be working hard on all the necessary procedures to ensure that this is done on time," Ho said, referring to the public tender for the new licenses, the rules for which were approved in the final reading on Tuesday (June 21).

All gaming operators have expressed in a statement that they would make very effort to obtain the new gaming concession in the upcoming public tender.

The operators have paid



some MOP47 million for the concession extension.

In a note, brokerage JP Morgan is expecting the new public tender for the city's gaming licenses to commence in late July or August, basing its expect-

tations on the timeline of 2001.

The note was issued after lawmakers approved the new gaming law Tuesday, cementing increased oversight of casino operations by the government. **RM**

## GOV'T ORDERS SUSPENSION OF ENTERTAINMENT VENUES, DINE-IN SERVICES

**T**HE government has announced in an Official Gazette entry the shutdown of all entertainment venues citywide from 5 p.m. yesterday as Covid-19 cases in the city surged to 110 as of the latest update at 3 p.m.

The shutdown involves cinemas, theaters, indoor amusement venues, video game arcades, internet cafes, snooker and billiards parlors, bowling venues, steam and sauna parlors, massage parlors and beauty centers.

Gyms, health clubs, karaoke venues, bars and pubs, nightclubs, discos, dance parlors,

singing parlors, barber and hairdresser shops, as well as swimming pools that take public swimmers, have also been ordered to close.

Meanwhile, all dine-in services will be halted. Takeaway food and drink services will remain permitted.

The Chief Executive has ruled out the shutdown of casinos.

This is the third time that the government has ordered entertainment venues and facilities to close.

Last year, restrictions were relaxed after the city had seen no new Covid-19 cases for 13 consecutive days. **AL**



# CHINA'S XI CRITICIZES SANCTIONS AT MEETING OF BRICS NATIONS

**C**HINESE President Xi Jinping opened a meeting of leaders of major developing countries yesterday by saying the world should oppose unilateral sanctions and efforts by some countries to maintain their political and military power.

Xi's remarks at the virtual meeting of the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, known collectively as "BRICS," reflect China's tacit backing of Russia in the war in Ukraine and its desire to form an international alliance opposed to the U.S.-led liberal democratic order.

The BRICS meeting comes amid rising concerns over the global economic outlook and a growing political divide between China and India.

Nations need to "reject the Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation, oppose unilateral sanctions and abuse of sanctions, and reject the small circles built around hegemonism by forming one big family belonging to a community with a shared future for humanity," Xi was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency.

While no agenda has been issued for the two-day talks, Ukraine is likely to feature heavily in the background. China has refused to condemn Russia's

AP PHOTO



invasion while criticizing sanctions brought against Moscow. India has bought large amounts of Russian oil at a heavy discount, and South Africa abstained in a United Nations vote condemning Russia's actions.

Along with Xi, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin, South African President Cyril

Ramaphosa and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro are joining the discussions.

China has sought to use the BRICS meetings to further its vision of an alliance to counter the U.S.-led liberal democratic world order while expanding its economic and political footprint.

In an address to the BRICS

Economic Summit on Wednesday, Xi said the conflict in Ukraine has "sounded an alarm for humanity," continuing its formal position of neutrality while backing its ally Russia.

Xi said imposing sanctions could act as a "boomerang" and a "double-edged sword," and that the global community would suffer from "politicizing,

mechanizing and weaponizing" global economic trends and financial flows.

"Economic globalization is an objective requirement for the development of productive forces and an irresistible historical trend," Xi said.

In a recorded video, Bolsonaro made no mention of any country and said that "the current international context is a cause for concern because of the risks to trade and investment flows to the stability of energy supply chains and investment."

"Brazil's response to these challenges is not to close itself off. On the contrary, we have sought to deepen our economic integration," he added.

The BRICS collective was founded in 2009 when the countries were seen as the potential engine for future global economic growth.

Since then, South Africa and Brazil have seen their economies become mired in crisis while China's growth has sharply declined and Russia has become embroiled in its invasion of Ukraine and punishing economic sanctions imposed by the West.

China and India have meanwhile feuded over their disputed border and New Delhi's defense partnership with the U.S., Japan and Australia in what is known as "The Quad." Skirmishes along the frontier resulted in a major standoff in 2020 leading to casualties on both sides. **MDT/AP**

## DIPLOMACY

# Chinese, Iranian FMs holds phone conversation on ties

**C**HINESE State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held a phone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Abdollahian at the latter's request.

Amir Abdollahian wished a complete success for the 14th BRICS Summit as well as the High-level Dialogue on Global Development and expressed the belief that China as the rotating chair will create new opportunities for multilateral cooperation within the framework of the BRICS.

He reiterated Iran's support for the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative proposed by China.

Wang said the BRICS Summit and the High-level Dialogue on Global Development to be hosted by Chinese President



Xi Jinping holds great significance for strengthening the construction of the BRICS mechanism, enhancing the unity and cooperation between

emerging markets and developing countries, as well as facilitating global efforts in dealing with common challenges to development.

China highly values its relations with Iran and stands ready to work with the Iranian side to continue to firmly support each other on issues concerning

their respective core interests and major concerns in the spirit of the comprehensive strategic partnership, he said.

Amir Abdollahian briefed Wang on latest progress in the negotiations on resuming the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

He added that the Iranian side will unswervingly safeguard its national interests, and is firmly committed to resolving differences through negotiations, so as to achieve an agreement at an early date.

Amir Abdollahian also expressed gratitude to China for its constructive role on the Iranian nuclear issue.

Wang said that China disapproves of any non-constructive measures that lead to the continuous

escalation of the situation, and that all parties should continue to uphold the correct logic of right and wrong and work tirelessly to reach an agreement through diplomatic efforts.

Wang said China opposes the politicization of affairs of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and supports the IAEA and Iran to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue and cooperation.

He said the U.S. side should earnestly realize its own responsibility and actively respond to Iran's reasonable demands, adding that the Chinese side will continue to uphold justice, support the negotiation process, and is willing to maintain close communication with the Iranian side. **XINHUA**

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## SANDS CHINA NEWS

### Sands China Signs Memorandum of Understanding with MFTA on Global Exhibitions Day 2022

Mutual cooperation to promote Green MICE

Sands China Ltd. signed a memorandum of understanding with the Macau Fair & Trade Association (MFTA) June 1 during the Global Exhibitions Day 2022 event (GED2022) at The Londoner Macao to mark their joint commitment to promoting and strengthening the sustainable development of the convention and exhibition industry in Macao.

"This key strategic initiative for Sands China represents our mutual cooperation with MFTA and our support of the Macao government's target of net zero emissions, and links into the carbon neutrality goals of the central government's 14th Five-Year Plan," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd. "We are working hand-in-hand with each other to seek a carbon neutral exhibition venue through a series of green principles and measures. As the MICE venue provider, Sands China has a special role to play in minimising our impact on climate change, together with the industry."

The Green Development and Carbon Neutrality MOU between Sands China and MFTA calls on them to cooperate with joint efforts to meet sustainability aims in promotion of green development, carbon neutrality and maintaining alignment with the Environmental Protection Planning of Macao for "Building a Green Macao with Low Carbon Footprint."

Carbon neutrality is achieved by calculating a carbon footprint and reducing it to zero through a combination of efficiency measures in-house and supporting external emission reduction projects such as clean energy enterprises like wind, solar or hydroelectric plants.

Sands China, in partnership with MFTA, will promote the upcoming 2022 MIECF in August as Macau's first carbon neutral exhibition at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo. Both parties also endeavour to jointly develop training programmes for the industry that focus on green education and that highlight the importance of reducing energy consumption, waste and usage of single-use equipment; reusing; and offsetting the carbon footprint when operating events in Macao.

Sands China's environmental sustainability efforts are part of the Sands ECO360 global sustainability strategy of parent company Las Vegas Sands Corp. More information about the programme is available at <https://www.sands.com/responsibility/planet/#our-program-sands-eco360>.



# Japan suspect in Covid relief fraud deported by Indonesia

MARI YAMAGUCHI,  
ANDI JATMIKO  
& EDNA TARIGAN, TOKYO

A Japanese man accused of defrauding the government of 1 billion yen (\$7.3 million) intended for small Japanese businesses hurt by the coronavirus pandemic was arrested on board a flight Wednesday after being deported from Indonesia, where he fled 1 1/2 years ago.

Mitsuhiro Taniguchi, 47, was arrested by Japanese police who accompanied him from Indonesia. He was taken to a police station after landing at Tokyo's Narita airport, Japanese media reported. Police confirmed his arrest.

Indonesian immigration official Douglas Simamora said earlier Wednesday that Taniguchi was deported after his passport was revoked by the Japanese government and because he had no Indonesian residence permit.

Indonesian authorities arrested Taniguchi on June 4 at a house owned by a fish trader in Lampung province. During his stay there, he described himself as an investor interested in fisheries. Indonesian authorities are investigating whether

other people in that country were involved in the fraud scheme linked to Taniguchi.

In one case, Taniguchi and his accomplice Koichiro Ota, 34, who was separately arrested Wednesday, allegedly defrauded the government of 2 million yen (\$14,700) by submitting a false application behalf of someone lacking eligibility for a subsidy, the Tokyo police said.

Taniguchi and a group of acquaintances allegedly submitted about 1,700 false applications for COVID-19 relief funds to the Japanese government and illegally received subsidies on more than 960 of those applications, taking with them about 1 billion yen (\$7.3 million), reports say.

Police arrested Taniguchi's ex-wife and their two sons — believed to be part of a larger group — in May on fraud allegations and were preparing to place Taniguchi on an international wanted list. The three suspects allegedly defrauded the government of 3 million yen (\$22,500) in COVID-19 subsidies from June to August 2020.

The case surfaced in August 2020 when the office offering the subsidies consulted with Tokyo police. Taniguchi entered Indonesia two months later on an investor visa. **MDT/AP**

# WHO considers declaring monkeypox a global health emergency

MARIA CHENG, LONDON

**A**S the World Health Organization convenes its emergency committee yesterday to consider if the spiraling outbreak of monkeypox warrants being declared a global emergency, some experts say WHO's decision to act only after the disease spilled into the West could entrench the grotesque inequities that arose between rich and poor countries during the coronavirus pandemic.

Declaring monkeypox to be a global emergency would mean the U.N. health agency considers the outbreak to be an "extraordinary event" and that the disease is at risk of spreading across even more borders. It would also give monkeypox the same distinction as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing effort to eradicate polio.

Many scientists doubt any such declaration would help to curb the epidemic, since the developed countries recording the most recent cases are already moving quickly to shut it down.

Last week, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the recent monkeypox epidemic identified in more than 40 countries, mostly in Europe, as "unusual and concerning." Monkeypox has sickened people for decades in central and west Africa, where one version of the disease kills up to 10% of people. In the epidemic beyond Africa so far, no deaths have been reported.

"If WHO was really worried about monkeypox spread, they could have convened their emergency committee years ago when it reemerged in Nigeria in 2017 and no one knew why we suddenly had hundreds of cases," said Oyewale Tomori, a Nigerian virologist who sits on several WHO advisory groups. "It is a bit curious that WHO only called their experts when the disease showed up in white countries," he said.

Until last month, monkeypox had not caused sizeable outbreaks beyond Africa. Scientists haven't fou-



nd any major genetic changes in the virus and a leading adviser to WHO said last month the surge of cases in Europe was likely tied to sexual activity among gay and bisexual men at two raves in Spain and Belgium.

To date, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed more than 3,300 cases of monkeypox in 42 countries where the virus hasn't been typically seen. More than 80% of cases are in Europe. Meanwhile, Africa has already seen more than 1,400 cases this year, including 62 deaths.

David Fidler, a senior fellow in global health at the Council on Foreign Relations, said WHO's newfound attention to monkeypox amid its spread beyond Africa could inadvertently worsen the divide between rich and poor countries seen during COVID-19.

"There may be legitimate reasons why WHO only raised the alarm when monkeypox spread to rich countries, but to poor countries, that looks like a double standard," Fidler said. He said the global community was still struggling to ensure the world's poor were vaccinated against the coronavirus and that it was unclear if Africans even wanted monkeypox vaccines, given competing priorities like ma-

laria and HIV.

"Unless African governments specifically ask for vaccines, it might be a bit patronizing to send them because it's in the West's interest to stop monkeypox from being exported," Fidler said.

WHO has also proposed creating a vaccine-sharing mechanism to help affected countries, which could see doses go to rich countries like Britain, which has the biggest monkeypox outbreak beyond Africa — and recently widened its use of vaccines.

To date, the vast majority of cases in Europe have been in men who are gay or bisexual, or other men who have sex with men, but scientists warn anyone in close contact with an infected person or their clothing or bedsheets is at risk of infection, regardless of their sexual orientation. People with monkeypox often experience symptoms like fever, body aches and a rash; most recover within weeks without needing medical care.

Even if WHO announces monkeypox is a global emergency, it's unclear what impact that might have.

In January 2020, WHO declared that COVID-19 was an international emergency. But few countries took notice until March, when the organization described it as a pandemic, weeks after

many other authorities did so. WHO was later slammed for its multiple missteps throughout the pandemic, which some experts said might be prompting a quicker monkeypox response.

"After COVID, WHO does not want to be the last to declare monkeypox an emergency," said Amanda Glasman, executive vice president at the Center for Global Development. "This may not rise to the level of a COVID-like emergency, but it is still a public health emergency that needs to be addressed."

Salim Abdool Karim, an epidemiologist and vice chancellor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, said WHO and others should be doing more to stop monkeypox in Africa and elsewhere, but wasn't convinced that a global emergency declaration would help.

"There is this misplaced idea that Africa is this poor, helpless continent, when in fact, we do know how to deal with epidemics," said Abdool Karim. He said that stopping the outbreak ultimately depends on things like surveillance, isolating patients and public education.

"Maybe they need vaccines in Europe to stop monkeypox, but here, we have been able to control it with very simple measures," he said. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1983 US ASTRONAUT SALLY RIDE RETURNS



America's first woman in space has returned safely to Earth in the Challenger space shuttle after a successful six-day flight.

Sally Ride, aged 32, captured the media's attention over the weeks leading up to blast-off on 19 June as the public realised history was in the making.

Ms Ride, a former tennis champion, decided to become an astronaut in 1977 after she saw a Nasa advertisement in the campus newsletter while studying English and physics.

She was one of more than 1,000 women and almost 7,000 men to apply for just 35 places on the 1978 training programme and it was there that she met her husband, fellow astronaut Steve Hawley.

Before blast-off last week, flight commander Robert Crippen said she had been chosen to fly purely on her skills and not for her gender.

As flight engineer, Ms Ride's main tasks were to monitor the controls and make sure nothing went wrong on ascent and descent.

Up in space she also had to control a 50ft retractable arm - which she helped to design - to retrieve a satellite package of experiments.

It was the first time a satellite had been grabbed from space and paves the way for repairing satellites in orbit.

"She is flying with us because she is the very best person for the job. There is no man I would rather have in her place," he said.

This was also the first time the shuttle carried five crew members, instead of the usual three. Along with Sally Ride and Robert Crippen were Rick Hauck, John Fabian and Dr Norman Thagard.

Ms Ride is the third woman to travel into space.

Today she received a telegram congratulating her achievement from the world's first female cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova.

America's first female in space would have received a much larger public welcome today had it not been for poor visibility that forced Challenger to change its point of arrival.

The crew of STS-7 were due to complete their mission at Cape Canaveral, in Florida. But cloud cover meant a change of plan and a landing at Edwards Air Force base in California, some 3,000 miles away.

Nasa had hoped for a Florida landing to reduce the expense and time taken to transport the shuttle back to Cape Canaveral for its next mission.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Two years later, tragedy struck when the Challenger space shuttle exploded on 28 January 1986, killing all on board including Christa McAuliffe, who was to be the first schoolteacher in space.

Sally Ride is the only person to have worked on investigations into both the Challenger and Columbia shuttle disasters.

She remained an astronaut until 1987, when she resigned from Nasa and took up an academic post at Stanford University.

Two years later she moved to the University of California in San Diego to become professor of physics and director of the California Space Institute.

She has written several children's books about space exploration.



**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Work hard on improving your living quarters. Family get-togethers will be interesting. You can enjoy short trips. Don't be too hard on your mate.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20

If possible, rely on coworkers to back your objectives, and talk to superiors in order to get approval. You can find solutions if you are willing to communicate.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21

You always seem to spend more than you make. Try not to judge too quickly. Take that long overdue vacation if you can.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Take work home but be sure to spend some time with your mate. Keep on your toes when dealing with others. You should include children in your activities.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Group endeavors will provide you with entertainment. Don't let your emotions take over. You may want to take a serious look at your goals and objectives.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Just be yourself. Opportunities to expand your circle of friends will result in possible new romantic encounters. You need a job with more responsibility and a higher wage.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You can continue to make gains if you call a few people who can help you close an important deal. New methods and innovative technology will make your job far easier than you anticipated.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Take time to reevaluate your motives regarding friendships. Your ability to ferret out secret information will lead you to an inside scoop on an amazing financial deal.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your competitive nature will enable you to win any contest you enter. Try to be reasonable. You may find that your emotional partner will not be too eager to accommodate you.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Make any necessary changes to your insurance policy. Self-improvement projects will payoff in more ways than one. Exercise your talents and present your ideas to groups you think you can contribute to.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Visit someone who hasn't been feeling well lately. Travel should be on your agenda. You mustn't give too much to your children.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Social activities will be satisfying. You need to make changes that will raise your self esteem, such as a new hairstyle or a new image. Get out and get active.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

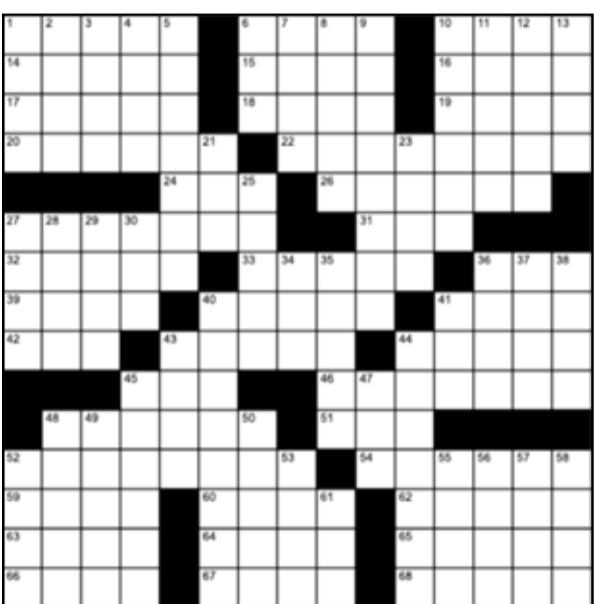
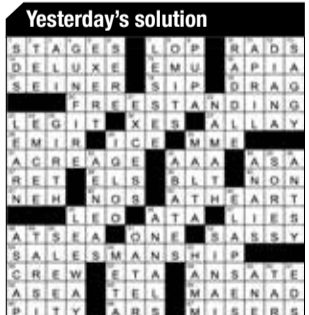
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	23	36	fine
Changchun	17	24	rain
Chengdu	23	33	cloudy
Chongqing	25	31	thunderstorms
Fuzhou	26	37	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	35	thunderstorms
Guiyang	21	27	cloudy
Haikou	25	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	32	rain
Harbin	18	26	rain
Hefei	24	33	rain
Nanjing	25	32	thunderstorms
Shanghai	27	32	rain
Taipei	25	30	rain
Wuhan	25	29	rain
Hong Kong	28	31	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	18	28	clear
Frankfurt	16	26	thunderstorms
Paris	17	23	rain
London	14	22	overcast
New York	19	27	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS 1-** Jargon; 6- Aggregate; 10- Hamlet, for one; 14- Pertaining to Benedict XVI; 15- Earthen pot; 16- Specialty; 17- Actor Davis; 18- Derrick; 19- Tidy, without fault; 20- 1994 Denis Leary comedy; 22- Small pincers; 24- Cone maker; 26- Slowpokes; 27- Quarrel; 31- Energy unit; 32- Drive back; 33- Gather together; 36- Skye cap; 39- I smell \_\_\_!; 40- Agitates; 41- Spanish surrealist; 42- Asian holiday; 43- Icon; 44- Men; 45- \_\_\_ little teapot...; 46- Bright red color; 48- Potentate; 51- Slugger Williams; 52- Pitiabie; 54- Borrowed; 59- \_\_\_ sapiens; 60- Supermodel Sastrre; 62- Keep an \_\_\_ the ground; 63- Western writer Wister; 64- Centrepiece of the human face; 65- Spirited horse; 66- Actress Heche; 67- Clench; 68- Clogs, e.g.;

**DOWN 1-** Predicament; 2- Lid attachment; 3- Semicircular recess; 4- Depilatory brand; 5- Merry; 6- Crowd; 7- Tons; 8- Reduces speed; 9- Monotony; 10- Gdansk; 11- Staggering; 12- Approaches; 13- Chow; 21- In shape; 23- Hearing organs; 25- Gaucho's rope; 27- Fiddlesticks!; 28- Able was \_\_\_...; 29- Petty quarrel; 30- Domesticated animal; 34- Russian fighter; 35- Give it \_\_\_!; 36- Like some orders; 37- "Hard \_\_\_!" (sailor's yell); 38- Atomizer output; 40- Wonderful; 41- \_\_\_es Salaam; 43- Apple product; 44- Insanity; 45- Chant; 47- Corporate VIP; 48- Destroy by immersion; 49- Red Sea land; 50- Choir member; 52- Rider's command; 53- He played Ricky; 55- Narrow strip of wood; 56- Nabisco cookie; 57- To \_\_\_ (perfectly); 58- Agrees tacitly; 61- Equinox mo.;



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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BOOK IT

# 'THE LIES I TELL' IS A HARD TO PUT DOWN THRILLER

**CLEAR** your schedule to read "The Lies I Tell" because this book is nearly impossible to put down from the first page.

It begins from the perspective of Kat Roberts, an unsatisfied journalist, who has waited 10 years to expose the many grifts of Meg Williams, a con artist who she blames for altering the course of her own life when she was on an uphill trajectory.

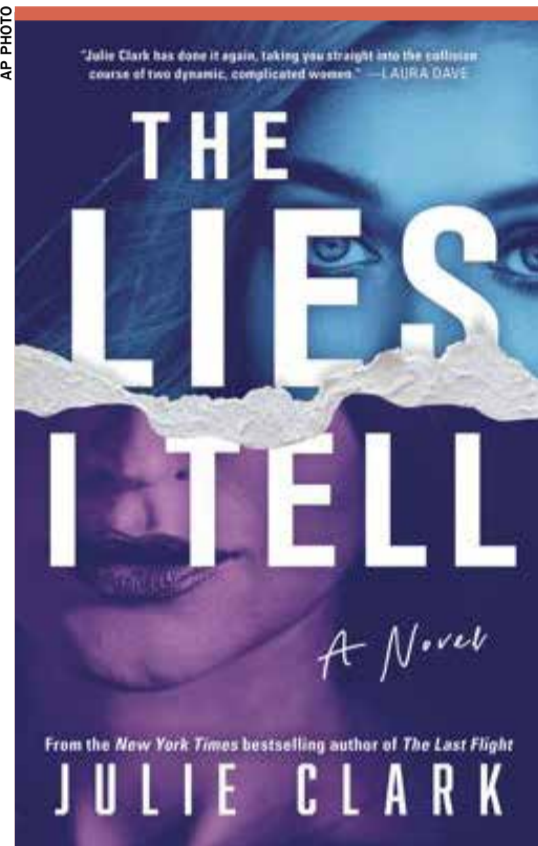
The story then shifts to Meg's first person narrative. On the surface, she's attending the fundraiser at the invitation of a new friend to mingle and network. In reality, she's been plotting for weeks to get invited. She's got her own plan for retribution in the works against the candidate for state senator whom the fundraiser is for.

Kat and Meg meet, each thinking they're playing one another. They quickly build up a friendship, or fauxship, but soon find themselves caring for one another. That's obviously not supposed to happen when you're each lying to the other about your intentions. Over time they

each let their guard down just enough to see the real person each is.

The book shifts perspectives between Kat and Meg so the reader is in on their true intentions from the start. For the reader, these revelations lead to questions about the possible gray area of doing what's "wrong" in order to make things right.

Clark, the best-selling novelist of "The Last Flight," also has created a cautionary tale about the internet and social media. This book may want you to think twice about sharing your every move



"The Lies I Tell" by Julie Clark (Sourcebooks Landmark)

with the world, because you never know who is paying attention.  
ALICIA RANCILIO, MDT/AP

tTUNES

# INDIE ROCKERS FOALS OFFER ALBUM PERFECT FOR SUMMER

**INDIE-POP** art rockers Foals gave us more than enough to process with their last offering. Now they seem to want us to dance. And dance we must.

The upbeat, very funky and always brilliantly layered, 11-track "Life Is Yours" captures a band between clouds, the perfect slice of summer fun. Look no further than "2001," an infectious track of disco-smearing funk, and "2AM," a propulsive ode to not going home alone.

Escapism may be the word as Foals look back on parties and recreational drug-fueled gatherings, a clear reaction to lockdowns and isolation. "I've been waiting all day inside/Waiting for a summer sky/When we run wild," Philippakis sings.

Having shed two members, Foals – now a three-piece with multi-instrumentalist Philippakis, drummer Jack Bevan and guitarist and keyboardist Jimmy Smith – oddly don't sound like they've lost 40% of their sound. They've tapped several different producers this time and a varied, addictive take on the upbeat has been achieved.



"Life Is Yours," Foals (Warner Records)

The second half is positively dance hall psychedelic, with "Wild Green" a synth-led ode to spring, and "The Sound" almost veering into dubstep. "Under the Radar" has Philippakis' voice heavily synthesized in an '80s New Wave song skeleton and ends with his falsetto soaring.

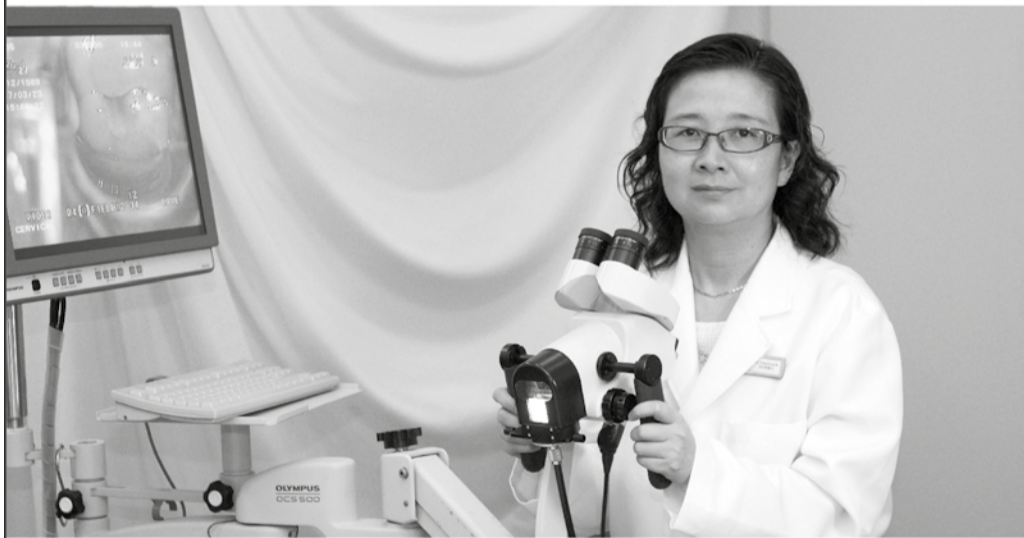
The shimmering "Crest of the Waves" sounds like it was birthed in a ray of sunshine. Philippakis says he's waiting in the warm waves of the Caribbean, and isn't it time we paddled out to meet him? MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP

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DRIVE IN

# Austin Butler, Baz Luhrmann deliver a grand 'Elvis'

LINDSEY BAHR,  
AP FILM WRITER

**T**HE brief life of Elvis Presley is not something that fits neatly into a conventional biopic formula, though many have tried. It was, perhaps, always going to take a director as wild and visionary as Baz Luhrmann to do something that evokes the essence of the King's 42 years. Luhrmann knows better than to adapt a Wikipedia page when it comes to a such a singular, larger-than-life star whose legend has only intensified and obscured almost a half a century after his death. Plus, he found a perfect star in Austin Butler, who fearlessly embodies the icon without ever slipping into impersonation.

With "Elvis," Luhrmann and Butler have



Austin Butler in a scene from "Elvis"

created something gloriously messy — a maximalist opera of contradictions, styles, truths, myths, memories and headlines. It doesn't ex-

plain, apologize or concern itself with logic. Dates and locations, when they're conveyed at all, often fly by with little fanfare in montages of newspaper headlines or broadcasts. No one who doesn't already know the facts of Elvis Presley's life is going to ace any trivia round about him after this film. It sidesteps or completely disregards some seemingly significant things like the fact that he met Priscilla (given depth by Olivia DeJong) when he was 24 and she was 14. His entire Hollywood career is summed up in a quick montage that ends with Tom Hanks' Colonel Tom Parker saying in voiceover that "we had a lot of fun."

Perhaps it's because there are other moments that Luhrmann and his team of screenwriters deem more important — Elvis' early acts of rebellion in defiance of local politicians, the death of his mother, the assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and John and Robert Kennedy, the 1968 leather-clad comeback special and the gilded cage of his Las Vegas residency, among them.

And still, this almost three hour extravaganza

that takes you from cradle to grave (and beyond) goes by in a fizzy, glittery, sweaty flash that does not leave you unsatisfied. It is propelled by Butler's transcendent portrayal of Elvis from age 17 on, capturing his almost overnight ascent from a scrawny truck driver and occasional singer to being the most famous man in the world. Parker, Elvis' controversial manager and promoter, may not have known much about music, but he saw what Elvis did to an audience with his proto-punk stylings, gyrating hips and blend of country and R&B and knew there was money to be made off this kid.

The story is actually first framed as the morphine memory of Parker, who is dying in an austere hospital room overlooking the gaudy Las Vegas strip two decades after Elvis had passed. Parker tells the audience that he is not the villain. This is surely his prerogative and probably something he believed to be true despite all the evidence to the contrary that this carnival huckster ultimately broke his fragile star (or at least set him on a path to inevitable ruin). And yet the fact that even under mountains of prosthetics and

a strange accent that it is still Tom Hanks with his endlessly empathetic eyes may have you second guessing yourself, or understanding why Elvis might have second-guessed himself. The artifice of his performance fits in the context of Luhrmann's theatrical storytelling.

Though the film is flimsy with biographical facts, it does make sure to put Elvis's Mississippi and Beale Street influences front and center. We see him soak up everything from the sensuality of the juke joints and the rapture in the Pentecostal revival tents he saw as a child to the work of Black artists like B.B. King (Kelvin Harrison Jr.), Big Mama Thornton (Shonka Dukureh), Sister Rosetta Tharpe (Yola), Little Richard (Alton Mason) and Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup (Gary Clark Jr.) he'd see later.

It's all presented without commentary, judgment or much introspection. Is it a cop out? A choice? Is it daring the audience to make their own conclusions? Whatever it is, it's at least consistent with a movie where "Dr. Nick" and his pills seem to just appear out of the blue. And, again, "Elvis" seems to be more about getting you on a gut, emotional level than inundating you with facts and complexities around race and business in mid-century America.

Luhrmann never does anything by half measures, but perhaps one of the most striking things about "Elvis" is how ultimately restrained it is in the end. This could have been a wall-to-wall Can-Can fever dream, full of rhinestones and dizzying camera movements. There is some of that, certainly. But Luhrmann and his collaborators reserve most of that chaotic energy for the stage, and more specifically Elvis's person. It is as though the wildness of all of Luhrmann's films is bursting out of Butler's Elvis, through his hip thrusts and sweat and that booming, beautiful voice.

"Elvis," a Warner Bros. release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "substance abuse, strong language, suggestive material and smoking." Running time: 159 minutes. ★★★★★

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Contact: Ms. Amy Yang  
Email: amy@ktranz.com.mo  
Tel: +853 2871 6081/2 Fax: +853 2871 6084

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

OPINION

World Views

Andrii Parkhomenko, University of Southern California  
The Conversation/MDT

PANDEMIC'S IMPACTS ON HOW PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK MAY CHANGE CITY CENTERS FOR DECADES TO COME

If companies allowed more of their employees to permanently work from home, businesses would gravitate toward city centers, while people would primarily live in the periphery, resulting in less traffic congestion and falling real estate prices downtown.

Those are our main findings from a model we created to forecast pandemic-driven changes in Los Angeles. Many of these changes were beginning to happen back in the spring of 2020, when we began this research. We wanted to build a model that could show the effects of more widespread telecommuting over a long period of time post-pandemic.

Our model is like an artificial world – think Sim City – in which virtual people choose where to live and where to work. Virtual companies provide jobs to workers, while virtual real estate developers provide offices, warehouses and housing, setting prices that match supply with demand.

Using pre-pandemic information about where people lived and worked as well as their commutes, we built the model of the Los Angeles metropolitan area with economist Matt Delventhal. The model also uses pre-pandemic data on commercial and residential real estate prices.

From 2012 to 2016, fewer than 4% of workers telecommuted in the Los Angeles metro area, according to our calculations from the American Community Survey. Today that figure is nearly 40%. Based on estimates that about a third of workers in Los Angeles have jobs that could be done remotely, our model predicts three important long-term effects if telecommuting at around this level becomes permanent:

- Residents would increasingly move from city neighborhoods to the suburbs, while companies would gravitate to the center.
- Average residential and commercial real estate prices would fall in central city locations, while housing prices in the suburbs would increase.
- Traffic congestion would ease everywhere and commuting time would drop.

Why it matters

The pandemic's arrival in early 2020 upended daily life for millions of American workers and the businesses that employ them.

Working at home, uncommon before the pandemic, became a necessity, which led employers and workers to realize that telecommuting is pleasant and productive. This resulted in large migrations of people who became untethered from their employers.

In Los Angeles, increased telecommuting led workers to relocate to the suburbs, driving up real estate prices. Our model takes this a step further and assumes these changes will become entrenched.

This prediction may be coming true. NPR recently reported that since 2020, homebuyers relocating from cities have been driving lower-income renters out of the suburbs.

This suggests our model can be a valuable tool to help business leaders, economists, policymakers and others make informed decisions as they try to make sense of the pandemic's far-reaching economic impacts on their cities.

What still isn't known

Any model is a simplification of reality. In our model, all the workers and employers are identical. However, the real-life responses of different types of workers and businesses to increased telecommuting may vary.

Another important unknown is the ongoing effect of telecommuting on productivity. During the pandemic, employers and workers have not reported substantial productivity losses – if anything, workers have reported being a little more productive at home.

At the same time, productivity often benefits from opportunities to build and sustain professional networks. These networks may weaken as more people spend more time telecommuting.

[Abridged]

Andrea Fuentes prevented a tragedy at the swimming world championships with her quick reaction.

The United States coach knew something was wrong when she saw artistic swimmer Anita Alvarez sink motionless to the bottom of the pool during a solo free routine Wednesday.

The fully clothed Fuentes dived in. She swam to the unresponsive Alvarez, put her arms around her, and lifted her to the water's surface, where another person helped get her out of the pool.

Alvarez, a two-time Olympian, had fainted.

"It was her best performance ever, she just pushed through her limits and she found them," Fuentes joked.

Alvarez, who was immediately given medical attention, was feeling much better yesterday.

"Anita has been evaluated by medical staff and will continue to be monitored. She is feeling much better and using today to rest," USA Artistic Swimming told The Associated Press in a statement.

"Watching yesterday's medical emergency of 2x Olympian Anita Alvarez and subsequent rescue by coach Andrea Fuentes was heartbreaking for our community. She gave an exceptional solo performance and competed brilliantly in four preliminary and three final competitions across six days."

AP PHOTO



MILITARY

N. KOREA TALKS OF NEW ARMY DUTIES SUGGEST NUCLEAR DEPLOYMENT

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

**N**ORTH Korea discussed assigning additional duties to front-line army units at a key military meeting, state media said yesterday a move that analysts said indicates it plans to deploy battlefield nuclear weapons targeting South Korea along the rivals' tense border.

While much international attention has focused on North Korea's testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles potentially capable of reaching the U.S. mainland, it is also developing a variety of nuclear-capable short-range missiles that can target South Korea.

South Korean officials recently said that North Korea has completed preparations for its first test of a nuclear explosive device in five years, part of a possible effort to build warheads capable of being mounted on short-range missiles.

During an ongoing meeting of the Central Military Commission of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party, leader Kim Jong Un and other top military officers discussed on Wednesday "the work of additionally

confirming the operation duties of the front-line units of the Korean People's Army and modifying the operation plans," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

Kim also ordered steps to "enhance the operational capabilities of the front-line units," KCNA said. A KCNA photo showed what appeared to be a large map of the Korean Peninsula's eastern coast, including border sites, standing near the conference table.

Although there was no public mention of tactical nuclear weapons, "I can assess that the issues of forward-deploying tactical nuclear weapons and the modification of related operational plans and military organization reshuffles have been discussed in an in-depth manner" at the meeting, said Cheong Seong-Chang, a senior analyst at South Korea's private Sejong Institute.

Cheong said North Korea's push to deploy nuclear weapons at front-line units was expected since it said in April that its new tactical weapons would significantly boost the units' attack capacity and the efficient operation of tactical nuclear weapons.

A KCNA report on April 17 on the test-launch of what it called a new type of tactical guided weapon said it has "great significance in drastically improving the firepower of the front-line long-range artillery units, enhancing the efficiency in the operation of (North Korea's) tactical nukes and diversification of their firepower missions."

Later in April, Kim said North Korea could preemptively use nuclear weapons if threatened, saying they would "never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent" in situations in which the country faces external threats to its "fundamental interests." The possibility of North Korea having an escalatory nuclear doctrine could pose greater concern for South Korea, Japan and the United States.

North Korea has described some of its other short-range nuclear-capable missiles tested in recent years as tactical weapons, which experts say communicate a threat to proactively use them during conventional warfare to blunt the stronger conventional forces of South Korea and the United States. MDT/AP

**Iran** A court yesterday ordered the United States government to pay over \$4 billion to the families of Iranian nuclear scientists who have been killed in targeted attacks in recent years, state-run media reported. The largely symbolic ruling underscores the escalating tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, with negotiations to restore the tattered atomic accord at a standstill.

AP PHOTO



**European Union** leaders are set to make Ukraine a candidate for joining the 27-nation bloc, a first step in a long and unpredictable journey toward full membership that could take many years to navigate. Making Ukraine a contender now seems to be a done deal after national leaders were initially divided on how quickly to embrace the war-torn country's request to become an EU member, which the Ukrainian government submitted only a few days after Russia invaded its neighbor on Feb. 24.

**Germany** activated the second phase of its three-stage emergency plan for natural gas supplies yesterday, warning that Europe's biggest economy faces a "crisis" and storage targets for the winter are at risk after Russia reduced energy deliveries to several countries. The government said the decision follows cuts Russia made to natural gas flows starting last week and surging energy prices stoked by the war in Ukraine. Industrial customers are being asked to reduce the amount of natural gas they use, and Germany and other countries are turning back to coal as a replacement.

AP PHOTO



**Argentina** A judge ruled on Wednesday that eight medical personnel involved in the care of soccer star Diego Maradona will face a public trial for criminal negligence. Brain surgeon Leopoldo Luque and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov are among those who will stand trial for homicide, the judge ruled. The trial is not expected to begin until the end of 2023 or early 2024.