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NAT AND RAT WILL COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER FOR KEY GROUPS, NOW INCLUDING CASINO AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS: SSM

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AP PHOTO



India Tensions were high yesterday in the western Indian city of Udaipur, a day after police arrested two Muslim men accused of slitting a Hindu tailor's throat and posting a video of it on social media, in a brutal attack representing a dramatic escalation of communal violence in a country riven by deep religious polarization. The killing comes after months of rising tensions between Hindus and Muslims, and has raised fears it will spark increased violence. Authorities suspended internet services in the city and surrounding Rajasthan state in an attempt to prevent the gruesome video from being shared, while rushing additional police to Udaipur and banning large gatherings in an attempt to prevent religious unrest from escalating.

Afghan finance and central bank officials from the Taliban-led government departed for Qatar yesterday to meet with a U.S. Treasury department official, after last week's deadly earthquake highlighted how critical relief efforts have stumbled under the weight of the country's spiraling economic woes. Last week's devastating earthquake in southeastern Afghanistan killed around 770 people, according to U.N. figures, though the Taliban put the death toll at closer to 1,150, with thousands injured.

Sri Lanka More than 500 inmates escaped from a heavily guarded drug rehabilitation center in northern Sri Lanka yesterday after a suspicious death led to an outbreak of violence, police said. The Kandakadu rehabilitation center, about 250 kilometers northeast of the capital, Colombo, mainly treats prisoners convicted of drug-related crimes. Nearly 1,000 people were undergoing rehabilitation at the center, which is guarded by military troops.

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Gov't did not rule out the possibility of further reducing quarantine duration for foreign arrivals as Beijing eases Covid controls in biggest shift so far

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COVID-19 OUTBREAK

GOV'T: AMENDMENTS TO ITINERARIES PUBLISHED WERE NOT UNPRECEDENTED

YESTERDAY, it was reported that the itinerary of Case 271 had been modified and an updated version was published.

In the first version, the itinerary stated that Case 271, a man, visited a cafeteria in Coloane Village for three days in a row – from June 23 to 25. However, after the publication of the itinerary, social media users challenged the reliability of the information by noting that the cafeteria announced closures on June 24 and 25.

It was also pointed out that the man could not have gone out on June 24 because his building, Comandante Pinto Ribeiro Building, was cordoned off on that day.

Journalists wanted to know if there were any flaws in the itinerary declaration or publication process.

In answer to these questions, Leong emphasized that the building was only locked down in the evening of June 24. Therefore, Case 271 was still free to move in the morning and afternoon of that day.

Speaking on the confusion about the cafeteria, the public health doctor Leong Iek Hou defended the report, saying that Case 271 had a “habitual” routine. “He visits the cafeteria every day,” Leong said. This is why, when health workers asked him about his itinerary, he intuitively reported visits to the cafeteria. “But he had forgotten about the holidays announced by the cafeteria,” Leong explained. “After cross-referencing with him, we had to make amendments, mainly to the part concerning the cafeteria visits.”

In a follow-up question, the panel of officials was challenged on amendments made to other published itineraries. The public health doctor defended this practice by stressing the need to race against the spread of the virus.

HEALTH CHIEF REJECTS ‘CURIOUS QUESTIONS’

Director Alvis Lo of Health Bureau was unhappy with the raising of “curious questions” at the press briefing, saying that there are many other ways to ask these questions.

After a brief debate between government public health doctor and official Leong Iek Hou and journalists who wanted to know if errors – or worse, malpractice – occurred in the itinerary declaration process for positive cases,

ANTHONY LAM



Lo stepped in to make the aforementioned comment.

“I would like to invite people to use appropriate channels to raise questions about individual cases,” the health chief remarked. “Doing so will allow us to handle them as soon as possible.”

He assured the press conference that this would “certainly” be done.

The press briefing should instead be used to allow the government to release “important messages.”

“The aim of this press briefing is to disseminate our rationale and points that require public cooperation,” he highlighted. “We are not [running] a talk show but hope to put our focus on explaining policies and measures.”

“I regret any flaws that may occur in any areas of our work,” the health chief added.

Health officials have previously emphasized that failure to comply with Health Bureau guidelines might incur criminal penalties. For example, when questioned about forged health declarations in the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, health officials said that violators could be prosecuted.

POLICE DENY OBSTRUCTING JOURNALIST FREEDOM

There were complaints yesterday that some police officers in red zones obstructed reporters’ work. In response, Ma Chio Hong, the PSP representative at the press briefing, remarked that there is a lot to do when a building is identified as an infected zone. Police officers need to act quickly in compliance with SSM instructions and guidelines to cordon off the area, in addition to setting up necessary responses and work posts.

Ma emphasized that police fully respect journalistic rights and suggested that the media work from a safe distance. He suggested that staying too close to the zone without appropriate protective kit might pose risks for journalists.

REMINDER ON HEALTH CODE CHECKS

Leong highlighted that, in the latest health guidelines issued by the SSM, health code checks upon entering certain venues are recommended.

A journalist revealed that some venues had not been checking entrants’ health codes, while others had been. This may reflect confu-

sion on the part of both customers and workers in the venues.

In response, the public health doctor referred to the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, noting that the health code system was introduced to replace the health declaration system.

The different colors that signal different health conditions “have resulted in a massive benefit in this current outbreak,” the public health doctor claimed. “By these means, we can identify our own and other people’s risks.”

Moreover, she reiterated that, based on the health code system, the health agency had also introduced the footprint recording function, which is part of the mobile app version of the health

code system.

She even boasted that the effects of both the health code and the footprint recording functions “were foreseen” by the health agency.

Leong also discussed the new guidelines, published June 27. In this latest version, “we require operators of certain venues to check entrants’ health codes,” the public health doctor said.

“We once again encouraged venue operators to follow our guidelines,” she remarked.

In response to another journalist’s question, the public health doctor admitted that recommendations on the use of footprint recording are not included in this latest version of the guidelines.

COVID-19 CASES RISE TO 533

Macau’s Covid-19 cases continue to increase as the city recorded 49 new cases yesterday afternoon, bringing the total to 533. Positive cases have also been detected in an elderly home in Patane District. The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) representative noted that the situation was under control. A resident in the facility, aged

94, has contracted the disease and is now receiving medical attention. IAS has already issued guidelines on the implementation of the preventive closed-loop management. Also, all except 44 test tubes in this past round of the citywide SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test (NAT) have yielded negative results.

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Analysts say Beijing's eased quarantine a step in the right direction

LYNZY VALLES & ANTHONY LAM

CHINA'S easing of quarantine for foreign arrivals caught analysts by surprise, while others saw the move as just the right step even though Beijing is sticking to its zero-Covid strategy.

In a note by brokerage firm JP Morgan Securities (Asia Pacific) Ltd, analysts remarked that "the easing itself will not [impact] Macau's gaming revenues."

However, analysts considered the move "quite surprising," according to a report by GGRAsia, as they were expecting stringent measures to be in place until the Chinese Communist Party Congress, which is set to occur towards the end of the year.

The easing of quarantine is a move in a "good enough direction" in the analysts' view.

Anyone arriving from outside the country must stay in a quarantine hotel for seven days, followed by three days of home quarantine, the National Health Commission said in its latest pandemic response plan.

The previous rules required 14 days in a hotel plus seven days of home quarantine. Some cities, including Beijing, have already reduced the hotel requirement to seven or 10 days in recent weeks, according to Chinese media reports.

Beijing has maintained tight restrictions on international travel under a "zero-Covid" strategy that seeks to keep the virus out and stop any infections from spreading through lockdowns and mass testing.

This is the first official nationwide change in China's quarantine policy.

Analysts Vitaly Umansky, Louis Li and Shirley Yang at Sanford C. Bernstein Ltd said the move was "a



step in the right direction."

Currently, there are no indications of whether there will be changes to the individual visa scheme or group visa policies for Hong Kong and Macau, which have long been put on pause due to the pandemic.

The brokerage firm says that, "so far, it is clear China is sticking with the zero-Covid policy."

REVIEW OF QUARANTINE-UPON-ARRIVAL IS CONSTANT

Some Macau residents who returned to their homes in Zhuhai after June 18 regained freedom of movement yesterday, following the latest announcement. They were complying with previous guidelines but were deemed suitable for release under the new version.

Health Bureau director Alvis Lo was asked whether Macau will follow suit. Local officials have reiterated that the city must follow mainland guidelines on the containment of SARS-CoV-2 or it will lose the mainland visitor market.

In response to the question, Lo admitted that his bureau has been studying the new guidelines. "We will not rule out the possibility of adjusting quarantine-upon-arrival durations," the health chief said.

SMM workers are too busy containing the current serial infections, he added, so it might be too early to announce any news in this respect.

"Updates will be announced when available," the health chief concluded.

GOV'T DENIES SIX INFECTED MEDICAL STAFF CONTRACTED VIRUS AT WORK

SINCE June 18, the city has seen six SSM staff contract the virus. Four are directly employed by the bureau and the remaining two are third-party cleaning service providers.

The four SSM workers are a NAT sample collector, a clinical nurse at the Public Health Clinical Centre

in Coloane, an A&E nurse and a medical assistant. They are all under either hotel quarantine or medical isolation.

When asked whether health measures should be strengthened at medical facilities, the health chief Alvis Lo denied that the employees contracted the

virus at their workplaces.

He emphasized that the medical staff who tested positive had contracted the virus before they started closed-loop commuting at the bureau.

Supporting his claim, the pulmonologist remarked: "if they had contracted the virus at

work, there would be a chain reaction and thus an outbreak [within their workplaces]."

Previously, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak had also denied that the then single case of infection found in a police officer was work-related.

It was also announced by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) yesterday that, since June 18, five police officers have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. **AL**



COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Health chief defends regular NATs for casino workers

ANTHONY LAM

SARS-COV-2 nucleic acid tests (NAT) and rapid antigen tests (RAT) will complement each other for key groups, now including casino and construction workers, the local health chief said yesterday.

A new requirement for casino workers and visitors, as well as construction workers, will be in place from July 1.

Starting on that day, casino staff and visitors, as well as construction site workers, will be required to return negative NAT results from within the last 48 hours in order to access casinos and construction sites.

Workers will also be required to take a RAT every day before going to work. If they receive a positive result, they should call for an ambulance immediately.

At yesterday's daily health press briefing, it was asked whether workers could choose to perform only one of the types of tests, because to do both would cause not just inconvenience, but also physical risk, to workers.

In response, pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM), explained that both methods complement each other in detecting infections in communities.

"They will help us spot positive cases as early as possible, which is our primary job," Lo said.

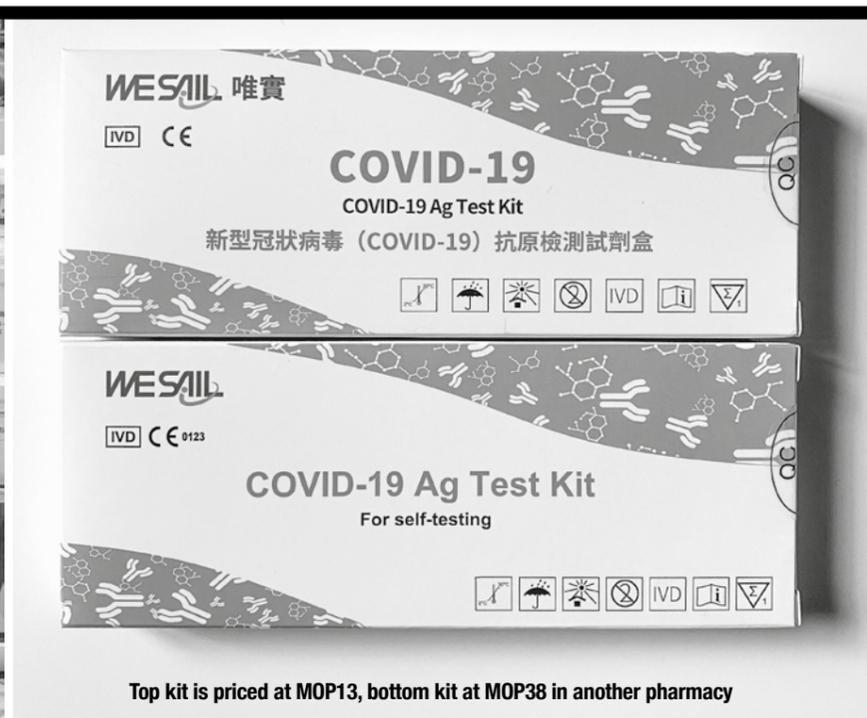
Due to the level of potential risk, certain types of workers should regularly take either or both of the two tests, Lo added. He stressed that this requirement has already been in place as a regular strategy. "The coverage and frequency have only been expanded as per the characteristics of each outbreak and the development of potential risks," the pulmonologist explained.

He added that adjustments to measures would take place sooner or later, but "integrated evaluation" is a must.

Asked whether the government will set up designated testing stations for specific occupations, the health chief appealed to employers and companies for assistance with this.

The health chief also announced that the Earth Tower of the Sheraton hotel will be used to accommodate positive cases. The tower has 2,000 rooms in total.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Top kit is priced at MOP13, bottom kit at MOP38 in another pharmacy

RAPID ANTIGEN TEST: EASILY AVAILABLE BUT PRICE SAVVY NEEDED

RENATO MARQUES

WITH a growing number of workplaces requiring daily negative tests for Covid-19, fears have arisen regarding both the quantity and price of rapid antigen tests (RAT).

Addressing the topic during a press briefing at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, coordinator of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, guaranteed the public that there was sufficient stock in local pharmacies, adding that the RAT kits available for sale in Macau are priced between 10 and 50 patacas.

In light of several reports on social media and from Times readers of difficulties acquiring the tests, the Times conducted research in several pharmacies to understand the current situation.

EASY TO FIND

The Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau (ISAF) publishes a list of available stock of Covid-19

rapid antigen tests in pharmacies which is updated several times a day between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. The Times visited several of the listed establishments.

In all pharmacies listed by the ISAF, the Times found stock of RAT kits from different manufacturers and suppliers. Stock of the same products was also found in other, non-listed pharmacies, as well in drug stores and health and wellness stores from popular and well-known brands.

In most cases, the products were on display right by the window or entrance and, in most cases, the price was also clearly displayed.

CAUTION REQUIRED ON PRICE

While there were no particular difficulties in finding RAT kits for sale, caution is advised for prospective purchasers as the sale prices varied significantly. Test kits in some stores were up to five times more expensive than virtually the same product in another store, as Leong mentioned in her remarks at the same press briefing.

While prices could vary between different brands due to differing importers, supply chains and for other reasons, consumers are advised to be vigilant.

In our research, the Times found two products from the same brand and apparently with the same specifications being sold with significant price differences.

The most glaring case was a product listed under the brand "Wesail," produced by Guangdong Wesail Biotech Co. Ltd., which was found for sale in two different ISAF-listed pharmacies located just a few hundred meters apart in the city center.

At the first pharmacy, the product was on sale for 38 patacas, while at the second pharmacy the price was only 13 patacas, which is almost three times less than the first store.

A close examination of the product did not find any difference between the two kits with the exception that in the first, more expensive case, the product's box had information only in English with additional instructions in

another nine languages, namely German, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Dutch, Greek and Portuguese. The cheaper product's box had bilingual information and instructions in English and Chinese.

Another price difference was evident in a kit from Hong Kong brand "Banitore," produced by Shenzhen CAS-Envision Medical Technology Co. Ltd, on sale in two different stores including an ISAF-listed pharmacy and a non-listed health and wellness store.

In the pharmacy, the price was 50 patacas for one test kit, while in the health and wellness store, the price was only 39 patacas, 22% cheaper than in the pharmacy.

This time there was absolutely no difference between the two products in terms of graphics, information or language used.

The Times asked a staff member of the pharmacy about the product and price, as the pharmacy also had another kit on display for half the price. The employee justified the price difference between this kit and others due

to it "allowing the RAT to be done either via oropharyngeal (throat) or nasopharyngeal (nose) swab."

This information is also printed on the boxes of both products.

In the northern district, a RAT in one pharmacy can cost only 8.50 patacas when a bulk of five kits is purchased.

WIDE RANGE OF OFFERINGS BUT NOT AT THE SAME STORE

While health authorities have previously said that all the products on sale are homologated and certified and can deliver results with similar accuracy, according to ISAF there are 71 different brands on sale in Macau.

Although this figure might suggest that there are broad offerings in the market, in reality, consumers should not expect to find more than two or three brands in each pharmacy, with many offering just one kind of product.

This means that, if you are looking for a specific product or brand, it might be a slog to look for it in pharmacies.

The Times also noted that, in covering a dozen pharmacies and other stores that sell RAT kits, none of the brands found on sale matched those of tests supplied by the government during the recent rounds of mass testing.

Residents call for more support for the elderly in reporting rapid tests

STAFF REPORTER

SOME radio listeners have called on the government to provide more support to the elderly in their use of the Macao Health Code.

Callers to yesterday's TDM Radio Forum said

that there are elderly people who can't find the link to upload rapid antigen test (RAT) results, and do not know how to upload the results to the online platform.

Given the spike in Covid-19 cases, residents were required yesterday

and today to take a RAT and upload the results to the health code.

One caller noted that it is difficult for the elderly to fill in their personal information every time they do the test, saying "it is definitely not convenient for them."

To register a RAT result,

individuals must enter their personal information as well as ID number, then upload a photo of the RAT. A verification code is also required.

Another caller said that her mother, who has a physical disability, was assisted by Social Welfare Bureau

staff during the first and second round of mass testing, but she did not receive support during the latest round that took place on June 27 and June 28

"There are many hills near her home, which [makes it] inconvenient for her to go to the testing station. We hope that the government can support her," she said.

Another resident suggested that "instead of uploading results of rapid antigen tests to the online

platform, it would be better to only show photos of results when entering the testing station, to reduce the inconvenience to the elderly."

According to the SAR government guidelines, all residents need to report a negative result by today to maintain a green health code. Otherwise, their health code will remain yellow until July 1 and they must perform a nucleic acid test at their own expense to return to a green code.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Hong Kong Chief Executive-elect John Lee (left) and Ho Iat Seng

CE to attend Hong Kong's 25th anniversary and inauguration of John Lee

LYNZY VALLES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE Ho Iat Seng is in Hong Kong until July 1 as the neighboring region marks the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland.

During his visit Ho will also attend the inauguration of Hong Kong's sixth-term government tomorrow.

Ho was invited by the HKSAR Chief Executive, Carrie Lam.

To take part in the celebratory events, the Government Informa-

tion Bureau stated that the "delegation will closely observe the anti-epidemic requirements of the HKSAR government."

A week prior to departing Macau, members of the Macau delegation began self-monitoring of their health and have been perfor-

ming a daily rapid antigen test and nucleic acid test. When in Hong Kong, "the delegation will be under a closed-loop management system, strictly following anti-epidemic rules, including those on testing," the bureau stated.

This means that the delegation, including Ho, will not be required to quarantine.

On their return to Macau, the Health Bureau will require the delegation to undergo a nucleic acid test on the first, second, fourth and seventh days after their re-entry. During that period, delegation members are not allowed to attend activities that would require the removal of a protective face mask.

Secretary for Administration and Justice Andre Cheong will be Acting Chief Executive during this period.

Hong Kong police confirmed Tuesday that Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit the city this week for the 25th anniversary.

Xi will attend a number of official events, including the inauguration of Hong Kong's next leader, John Lee, tomorrow.

Xi's visit will be his first trip outside of mainland China since the coronavirus pandemic began about two and a half years ago. It comes as Hong Kong faces a new spike in infections following what was by far its worst and deadliest Covid-19 outbreak earlier this year.

ISSUANCE OF T3 'RELATIVELY HIGH' TOMORROW

The chance of issuing tropical cyclone signal no.3 is "medium to relatively high" from the early morning to noon tomorrow. Since another low pressure area is expected to develop at the ocean to the east of the Philippines, the intensity and the track of the tropical depression remains uncertain. If the tropical cyclone takes a more northward track towards Macau the possibility of issuing higher signals will increase. Frequent showers and thunderstorms this weekend is also expected.

EXPORTS UP TO MOP1.1B IN MAY

Total merchandise exports amounted to MOP1.14 billion in May, up by 16.2% year-on-year, data from the Statistics and Census Service shows. The value of re-exports (MOP978 million) grew by 20.3%. This figure includes re-exports in the garments category and diamonds and diamond jewellery category, which surged by 234.3% and 97.1% respectively. From January to May this year, the total value of merchandise exports increased by 13.1% year-on-year to MOP6.21 billion. This includes the value of re-exports (MOP5.31 billion) and domestic exports (MOP901 million), which went up by 12% and 20.2% respectively.



HOTEL OCCUPANCY PLUMMETS 34% IN MAY

LYNZY VALLES

THE average occupancy rate of guest rooms in May dropped by 27.9 percentage points year-on-year to 34.2%, with the occupancy rate for 5-star hotels lower than the sector's average, at 31.3%.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) showed that the number of guests at hotel establishments in May slid by 39.9% year-on-year to 457,000, while the number of mainland guests plunged by 48.8%.

Local guests, on the other hand, surged by 28.1%.

Last month, official data

showed that visitor arrivals totaled 600,748, a decline of 30.6% year-on-year and a decrease of 1.0% month-on-month.

The drop occurred despite the five-day Golden Week, when the government had hoped that the hotel occupancy rate would reach 60%.

As regards the source of visitors, the number of visitors from mainland China declined by 32.3% year-on-year to 538,458, with 176,171 of visitors from the mainland travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme.

Hotel occupancy for this month is expected to rise

amid the current outbreak, which has impacted the willingness of tourists to travel from the neighboring region.

Workers residing in Zhuhai were required to undergo a 14-day quarantine upon arrival as the city has been recording an unprecedented outbreak, leading to three rounds of mass testing in only a week.

Yet on Tuesday, Beijing announced that anyone arriving from outside the country must stay in a quarantine hotel for seven days, followed by three days of home quarantine.

The hotel and tourism sector is bidding this summer farewell in terms of revenue from travelers, as well as from local residents, given that the city is in partial lockdown.

However, hotels are currently offering attractive rates to non-local employees to cater to those who live in the neighboring region.

The current outbreak is a significant setback to the ongoing recovery of the sector. In May, the tourism and hotel sector had already recorded some pickup and was expecting June – a traditionally busy month – to see more visitors.



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães

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AD

25TH ANNIVERSARY

HONG KONG BARS SOME JOURNALISTS FROM HANDOVER ANNIVERSARY

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong authorities, citing “security reasons,” have barred more than 10 journalists from covering events and ceremonies this week marking the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to China, according to the Hong Kong Journalists Association.

The journalists represent at least seven media outlets, including international news agencies Reuters and Agence France-Presse and others from Hong Kong, the association said in a statement posted online late Tuesday.

“The authorities have made ad hoc and narrow interview arrangements at this important juncture and have put forth vague grounds for refusal, seriously undermining the freedom of the press in Hong Kong,” the statement read.

The Hong Kong outlets affected include the English-language South China Morning Post, and Chinese-language newspaper Ming Pao as well as online news outlet HK01, the association said. The South China Morning Post said in a news report that one of its photographers had been rejected, with no reason given.

The rejections come amid



strict requirements for those attending the July 1 events. Journalists covering the events must have daily COVID-19 nucleic acid tests starting last Sunday and stay in a quarantine hotel from yesterday.

A news report by Hong Kong Economic Journal said at least three other journalists from local news outlets were informed yesterday that their applications to cover the events had

been rejected.

Despite receiving approvals that had instructions for checking in to the quarantine hotel, some received rejection notices yesterday while on their way to the hotel, while others were informed that they were barred from the events upon arrival.

Authorities had invited media outlets to submit up to 20 applications to cover the events — which include a flag-raising ce-

remony and the inauguration for the new Hong Kong government — but later specified that only one journalist from each outlet could be sent to cover each of the two events.

Reuters said in a news report it had put forward two journalists’ names to cover the events, and that both applications were rejected.

Ming Pao and HK01 did not immediately comment. Agence

France-Presse declined to comment and an SCMP spokesperson declined to comment beyond their news report.

The affected media organizations were invited to send other journalists to cover the event, but the replacements must also meet the quarantine and testing requirements, according to the journalist association’s statement.

The Information Services Department, which sent out the initial invites to media outlets informing them to register to cover the event, declined to provide information on how many journalists were given accreditation and also did not comment on an SCMP news report that said one of its own photographers had been barred from the event.

“The government is striking a balance as far as possible between the need of media work and security requirements,” the Information Services Department said in a statement. “We will not comment on the accreditation outcome of individual organisations and persons.”

The rejections came as Hong Kong police confirmed that Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit the city for the anniversary of the former British colony’s return to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997.

Xi’s visit will be his first trip outside of mainland China since the coronavirus pandemic took hold about 2 1/2 years ago. Police have announced a raft of security measures, including road closures and a no-fly zone. **MDT/AP**

FEATURE

Hong Kong Palace Museum - a new cultural landmark of Hong Kong

THE Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM), located in the West Kowloon Cultural District of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, was inaugurated on June 22 and is scheduled to open to the public on July 2.

More than 40,000 tickets were sold or reserved within eight hours on the first day of public sale, and all free visits on Wednesdays in July were fully booked.

The HKPM, a new cultural landmark of Hong Kong, not only adds to cultural atmosphere in the city, but also provides a new site for local residents and visitors to learn about the development of Chinese civilization and culture.

“This is a great gift from the motherland to Hong Kong,” said Louis Ng, direc-

tor of the HKPM.

More than 900 pieces of treasures from the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing will be put on display at the opening exhibitions.

From paintings and bronze wares to embroideries and ancient architectures, the exhibits span the 5,000-year history of Chinese civilization, covering all categories of the collection of the Palace Museum, including 166 pieces of first-class cultural relics of the country.

This will be the largest and highest-level cultural heritage exhibitions of the Palace Museum outside of the mainland since its establishment in 1925.

Preparatory work for the exhibitions began in 2018, with the Palace Museum

fielding a team of leading experts and scholars, in collaboration with the curatorial team of the HKPM.

“It is a great thing to display the pieces of cultural relics in Hong Kong, which reflects the central government’s support to the development of Hong Kong’s cultural undertakings,” said Ng, adding that the exhibits from the Palace Museum will present a cultural feast to Hong Kong residents by telling them about the motherland’s long history and splendid culture.

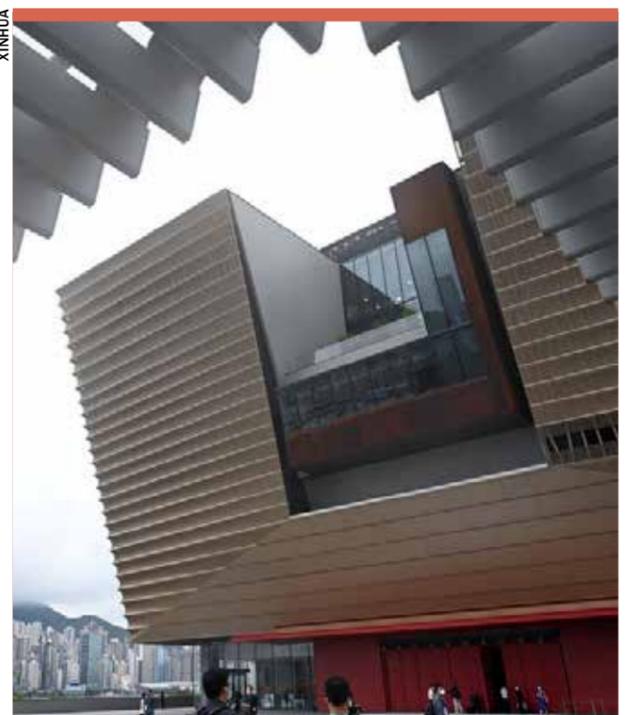
The HKPM embodies the excellence of traditional Chinese culture, as can be seen from the design and construction of the building. The museum building is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. The exterior walls are inlaid with

3,999 pieces of curved glazed tiles.

The museum adopts the distinctive “Central Axis” concept, and traditional Chinese cultural elements such as red doors decorated with golden doornails are also presented.

“Promoting traditional Chinese culture is one of our important tasks,” said Betty Fung, chief executive officer of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, adding that it is also the original aspiration and mission of the establishment of the HKPM.

She said the HKPM will actively push ahead with the publicity of the motherland’s culture and history after its opening, enhancing Hong Kong residents’ cultural confidence in the country, especially among



youths.

Thirteen pieces of artifacts from the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, will also be exhibited in the HKPM after it opens. Ng believes that this reflects the rationale behind the establishment of the HKPM, which is not only to inherit and promote traditional

Chinese culture, but also to promote cultural exchanges between the East and the West.

Fung said that the HKPM will actively enhance cooperation with international museums, telling the world the stories of China, including the stories of Hong Kong. **XINHUA**

PHILIPPINES

Ressa says courts to decide Rappler closure order

NOBEL Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa said her Rappler news website was operating "business as usual" yesterday and would let Philippine courts decide on a government order to close the outlet critical of the outgoing Duterte administration and its deadly drug crackdown.

The Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission on Tuesday affirmed its revocation of Rappler's license over a breach of the ban on foreign ownership and control of media outlets.

The case is one of several against Ressa and Rappler seen as part of an assault on press freedom under President Rodrigo Duterte, who leaves office Thursday and will be succeeded by Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the namesake son of the late dictator.

Ressa revealed the shutdown order against Rappler while speaking Tuesday at the East-West Center in Honolulu. "Part of the reason I didn't have much sleep last night is because we essentially got a shutdown order," Ressa told the audience.

She told reporters later in a Zoom interview that Rappler would continue to stand up for its rights. "You've heard me state repeatedly over the last six years

AP PHOTO



that we have been harassed. This is intimidation. These are political tactics. We refuse to succumb to them," Ressa said.

Rappler's attorney, Francis Lim, said the website had legal remedies available to question the SEC's administrative decision in the courts. "And we are confident that at the end of the day we shall

prevail," Lim said Wednesday in Manila.

"Rappler is facing government retaliation for its fearless reporting about rights abuses in the 'drug war,' Duterte and Marcos' use of disinformation on social media, and a wide variety of rights abusing actions over the past six years," Phil Robertson, the deputy

Asia director of Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. "This is an effort to shut up Nobel laureate Maria Ressa, and shut down Rappler, by hook or by crook."

Ressa and Russian Dmitry Muratov last year became the first working journalists in more than 80 years to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Muratov's newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, suspended operations in March after pressure from Russian authorities. It was the last major independent media outlet critical of President Vladimir Putin's government left in Russia after others either closed or were blocked following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

Ressa co-founded Rappler in 2012. After Duterte took office in 2016, it increasingly began reporting on the nighttime police raids that left hundreds and then thousands of mostly poor, petty drug suspects dead in overwhelmed morgues. Police said they were acting in self-defense when officers gunned down alleged drug dealers. Few suspects were questioned in what human rights activists soon described as extrajudicial executions.

Duterte and other Philippine officials have said the criminal complaints against Ressa and Rappler were not a press freedom issue but part of normal judicial procedures arising from their alleged violations of the law.

However, Duterte has openly lambasted journalists and news sites who report critically about him, including the country's largest TV network, ABS-CBN, which was shut down in 2020 after lawmakers refused to renew its 25-year license.

As Rappler's president and CEO, Ressa faces several criminal complaints over the website's news operations. She was convicted of libel in 2020 and sentenced to six years in prison but has remained free on bail while the case is on appeal. **MDT/AP**

SOUTH KOREA

Gov't approves first homemade Covid-19 vaccine

KIM TONG-HYUNG,
SEOUL

HEALTH officials in South Korea yesterday approved the country's first domestically developed Covid-19 vaccine for people 18 years or older, adding another public health tool in the fight against a prolonged pandemic.

In clinical trials involving some 4,000 participants in South Korea and five other countries, SK Bioscience's two-dose SKYCovione vaccine appeared to be more effective than the broadly used AstraZeneca shots in building immunity against infections, officials at South Korea's Food and Drug Safety Ministry said.

It isn't immediately clear how officials will administer the newly developed vaccine or how big of a role

AP PHOTO



South Korean Minister of Food and Drug Safety Oh Yu-Kyoung speaks during a briefing at the ministry of Food and Drug Safety in Cheongju, South Korea, yesterday

the shots will have in the next phase of the pandemic. The shots were designed

for the original version of the coronavirus, not the more transmissible omi-

cron variant that wreaked havoc in the country earlier this year. U.S. vaccine giant

Pfizer and Moderna have been speeding up their development of booster shots targeting omicron and experts say it's possible the virus could evolve again in the coming months.

South Korea's mass immunization campaign has been mainly dependent on Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA shots. But officials say protein vaccines like SKYCovione, which are similar to shots used for years against the common flu and hepatitis B, could appeal to people who are hesitant to use vaccines developed with newer technologies.

"The approval (of SKYCovione) internationally confirms the abilities of our companies to develop COVID-19 vaccines," Food and Drug Safety Minister Oh Yu-kyoung said in a brief-

ing. She said SK Bioscience is seeking an approval from the World Health Organization for its shots, which would potentially open export opportunities.

South Korea has eased most of its virus restrictions after battling an omicron surge earlier this year, but some experts say the country may see another rise in infections despite a high vaccination rate because of waning immunities and the possible emergence of new variants.

The country reported 10,463 new cases of the coronavirus yesterday, its first daily increase over 10,000 in 20 days. Health Ministry official Son Youngraee said during a separate briefing it's too early to tell whether the country is facing another surge after a months-long downward trend. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Ukraine's leader pushes for fuller NATO embrace, more arms

JILL LAWLESS,
JOSEPH WILSON
& SYLVIE CORBET, MADRID

UKRAINE'S president chided NATO for not embracing his embattled country more fully and asked for more weapons to fight off Russia, as the leaders of the alliance met to confront what NATO's chief called its biggest crisis since World War II.

Russia's invasion of its neighbor shattered Europe's peace, drove NATO to pour troops and weapons into eastern Europe on a scale not seen since the Cold War, and was set to give the defense organization two new members in Sweden and Finland.

Members of the alliance have also sent billions in military and civilian aid to Ukraine. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lamented that NATO's open-door policy to new members did not appear to apply to his country.

"The open-door policy of NATO shouldn't resemble the old turnstiles on Kyiv's subway, which stay open but close when you approach them until you pay," Zelenskyy said by video link to the leaders of the 30 NATO nations meeting in Madrid. "Hasn't Ukraine paid enough?"

He asked for more modern artillery systems and other weapons and warned the leaders that they either had to provide Ukraine with the help it needed to defeat Russia or "face a delayed war between Russia and yourself."

"The question is who's next? Moldova? Or the Baltics? Or Poland? The answer is: all of them," he said. "We are deterring Russia to prevent it from destroying us and from destroying you."

Zelenskyy has acknowledged that NATO membership is a distant prospect. The alliance is trying to strike a delicate balance, letting its member-nations arm Ukraine without sparking a direct confrontation between NATO and nuclear-armed Russia.

Under NATO treaties,



an attack on any member would be considered an attack on all and trigger a military response by the entire alliance.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged the enormous challenges, saying the alliance is "in the midst of the most serious security crisis we have faced since the Second World War."

But U.S. President Joe Biden, whose country provides the bulk of NATO's military power, vowed the summit would send "an unmistakable message ... that NATO is strong and united."

"We're stepping up. We're proving that NATO is more needed now than it ever has been," said Biden. He announced a hefty boost in America's military presence in Europe, including a permanent U.S. base in Poland, two more Navy destroyers based in Rota, Spain, and two more F35 squadrons to the U.K.

Still, strains among NATO allies have also emerged as the cost of energy and other essential goods has skyrocketed, partly because of the war and tough Western sanctions on Russia. There also are tensions over how the war will end and what, if any, concessions Ukraine should make to stop the fighting.

Money could also be a sensitive issue — just nine of NATO's 30 members currently meet the organization's target of spending 2% of gross domestic product on defense.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose country does hit the target, urged NATO allies "to dig deep to restore deterrence and ensure defense in the decade ahead."

The war has already triggered a big increase in NATO's forces in eastern Europe, and allies are expected to agree at the summit to boost the strength of the alliance's rapid reaction force nearly eightfold, from 40,000 to 300,000 troops, by next year. The troops will be based in their home nations but dedicated to specific countries on NATO's eastern flank, where the alliance plans to build up stocks of equipment and ammunition.

Stoltenberg said it was part of the "the biggest overhaul of our collective defense since the end of the Cold War."

The leaders are also set to publish NATO's new Strategic Concept, its once-a-decade set of priorities and goals.

The last such document, in 2010, called Russia a "strategic partner." Now,

the alliance is set to declare Moscow its No. 1 threat. The document will also set out NATO's approach on issues from cybersecurity to climate change — and the growing economic and military reach of China.

For the first time, the leaders of Japan, Australia, South Korea and New Zealand are attending the summit as guests, a reflection of the growing importance of Asia and the Pacific region.

Stoltenberg said China was not NATO's adversary, but posed "challenges to our values, to our interest and to our security."

Biden was due to hold a rare meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on the sidelines of the summit, focused on North Korea's nuclear program.

The summit opened with one problem solved, after Turkey agreed Tuesday to lift its opposition to Sweden and Finland joining NATO. In response to the invasion, the two Nordic nations abandoned their long-held nonaligned status and applied to join NATO as protection against an increasingly aggressive and unpredictable Russia — which shares a long border with Finland. MDT/AP

this day in history

1971 SPACE MISSION ENDS IN TRAGEDY



Three Russian cosmonauts have been found dead in their space capsule after it made what looked like a perfect landing in Kazakhstan.

Lieutenant-Colonel Georgi Dobrovolsky, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev were found dead in their seats on the Soyuz 11 but did not appear to have suffered any physical injuries.

Post mortem examinations are being carried out and the Soviet Government has ordered an immediate inquiry into the tragedy.

The most likely causes are oxygen failure on re-entry into the atmosphere or unknown side-effects of their lengthy stay in space.

The crew had spent a record 24 days in space, the longest period anyone has yet remained "weightless" and experts believe this could be linked to their deaths.

The cosmonauts had become the first men to stay at a space station when they docked with the Soviet Salyut 1. They were conducting scientific experiments and observations during their trip which started when they launched on 6 June.

The tragedy follows a number of problems involving Soyuz craft and could seriously damage the future of the Soviet space programme.

In 1967 Vladimir Komarov became the first man to die in space when the parachute on his Soyuz 1 developed trouble on landing and, after several other troubled missions, the flight by Soyuz 10 was abandoned before any of the crew boarded the space station due to technical difficulties.

The men will be buried at the Kremlin wall alongside Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space.

To acknowledge the magnitude of what the crew undertook they were immediately named Heroes of the Soviet Union. Mr Volkov has been given a Gold Star medal as he was previously named a hero of Soviet Union.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

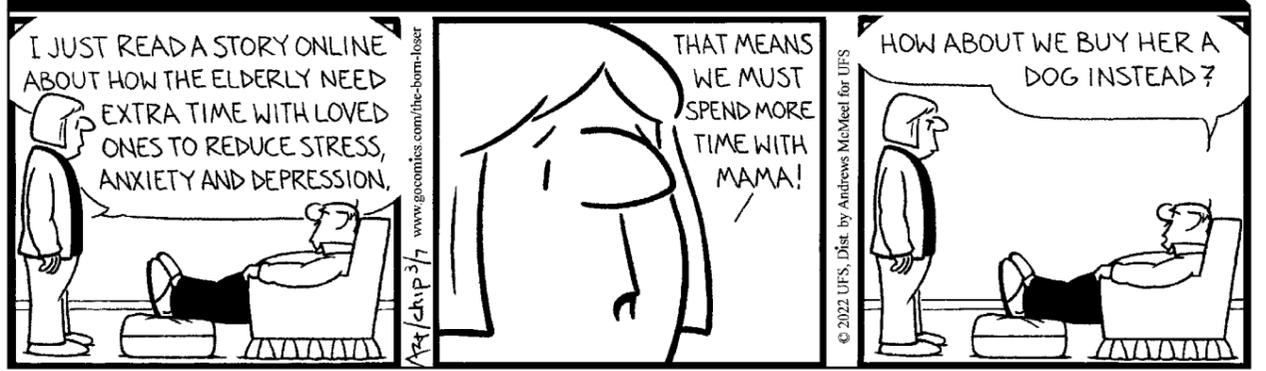
The inquiry concluded the three cosmonauts on the Soyuz 11 were killed by a fatal rise in their blood pressure caused when the cabin became depressurised. The cabin became depressurised because air escaped through a hole created when the landing capsule separated from the main craft. The crew who died - Georgy Dobrovolsky, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev - had been brought in as replacements for the original crew when Valery Kubasov became ill. It was two years before Russia sent another manned craft into space.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

<p>ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Don't let your boss make you feel guilty enough to take work home with you. Don't overspend to impress someone who interests you. Don't lend or borrow.</p>	<p>TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Do not overspend on entertainment. Deception will play an important factor in relationships. You can learn a great deal if you listen to those who are older or more experienced.</p>
<p>GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Empty promises are evident; therefore, get it in writing, to be safe. You can gain approval, get kudos, and ask for help if you put a little heart into your speech or request.</p>	<p>CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 A female colleague may cause problems for you. Your input into their activities will help bring you closer together. You will impress new friends and acquaintances with your intellectual wit.</p>
<p>LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Older family members will make demands on your time. Spend some time with the one you love. Pleasure trips will be satisfying. Your relationship is undergoing some changes.</p>	<p>VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Travel and entertainment will be pleasurable. Look into ways to better yourself through improving your dietary habits and daily routines. Try a barbecue or a day at the beach.</p>
<p>LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Organize your house and be sure to include the whole family in the projects you have set out to do. Try to keep to yourself; work diligently on domestic chores and responsibilities.</p>	<p>SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Minor health problems may flare up if you haven't been taking care of yourself or have been burning the candle at both ends. You can make financial gains if you are prepared to take a risk.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 So smile! You might find that a coworker has been two faced. Try spending the day catching up on any responsibilities that need to be taken care of.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Your partner may be somewhat irritable today. You can enhance your cash flow if you pick up additional skills. Your self confidence will attract members of the opposite sex.</p>
<p>AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Don't neglect these problems; deal with them once and for all, then move on to more pleasurable tasks. Find out all the facts before you jump to conclusions.</p>	<p>PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Don't neglect these problems; deal with them once and for all, then move on to more pleasurable tasks. Find out all the facts before you jump to conclusions.</p>

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	21	29	rain
Changchun	19	29	cloudy
Chengdu	23	34	overcast
Chongqing	25	37	cloudy
Fuzhou	27	32	rain
Guangzhou	26	34	thunderstorms
Guiyang	19	27	showers
Haikou	26	33	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	27	34	rain
Harbin	19	29	cloudy
Hefei	24	32	rain
Nanjing	25	31	thunderstorms
Shanghai	26	32	rain
Taipei	25	30	cloudy
Wuhan	26	34	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	31	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	15	26	overcast
Frankfurt	14	22	overcast
Paris	11	17	rain
London	12	19	showers
New York	22	32	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- In working order; 7- Drinking cup; 10- Course; 14- Permeable; 15- Paleozoic, for one; 16- Baseball family name; 17- Division of a poem; 18- Actor Vigoda; 19- 1996 Tony-winning musical; 20- Characteristic of reporters; 23- Pungent bulb; 26- German article; 27- Get to; 28- Course list?; 29- Road hazard; 30- ER VIP; 31- Himalayan peak; 33- Family; 34- Like some vbs.; 37- Lux. neighbor; 38- Battery size; 39- Paranormalist Geller; 40- China's Chou En-____; 41- This was produced by Van Gogh, for example; 42- Gal of song; 43- Petting; 45- Involuntary muscular contraction; 46- Cabinet dept.; 47- Othello villain; 48- Put down; 51- Pkixie; 52- Senior; 53- Occult; 56- Attention-getting sound; 57- N.L. West team, on scoreboards; 58- Designer Pucci; 62- French summers; 63- "Losing My Religion" band; 64- Indicate; 65- Wall St. letters; 66- Abbr. on a toothpaste box; 67- Newsman Charles;

DOWN 1- FedEx rival; 2- Foster Brooks persona; 3- First name in Notre Dame football; 4- French hello; 5- Chief island of the Philippines; 6- Biblical birthright seller; 7- Bully; 8- Living in a city; 9- Scottish Celt; 10- 3.26 light-years; 11- Prince Valiant's wife; 12- Medicine; 13- Small cabin; 21- Type of thermometer; 22- Sardonic; 23- Last Greek letter; 24- Not once; 25- Not moving; 29- Son of Abraham; 30- More urgent; 32- Less strict; 33- Chinese martial art; 34- Greek epic poem; 35- Scope; 36- Strictness; 44- Murdering; 45- African fly; 46- Nissan model; 48- Colorado resort; 49- Bosomy; 50- Church recesses; 51- Having auricular protuberances; 52- Chair designer Charles; 54- Japan's first capital; 55- Change the decor; 59- Canterbury can; 60- Skater Midori; 61- Brit. lexicon;



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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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TAIPA 1 BED	HKD 7,900	CENTRAL TAIPA 2-BEDS	HKD 4,380,000
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TAIPA MARINA BAY 1 BED	HKD 7,500	TAIPA STUDIO WITH BALCONY	HKD 3,780,000
HELLENE GARDENS 3 BEDS	HKD 13,500	TAIPA GREAT POTENTIAL 1-BED	HKD 3,480,000
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A technician monitors the self-driving taxi developed by tech giant Baidu Inc. on June 14, 2022, in Beijing

AUTOMOBILE

CHINA'S BAIDU RACES WAYMO, GM TO DEVELOP SELF-DRIVING CARS

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

WITH no one at the wheel, a self-driving taxi developed by tech giant Baidu Inc. is rolling down a Beijing street when its sensors spot the corner of a delivery cart jutting into its lane.

The taxi stops a half-car-length away. "So sorry," a recorded voice tells passengers. The steering wheel turns on its own as the taxi makes its way around the cart. A Baidu technician watches from the front passenger seat.

Baidu is China's highest-profile competitor in a multibillion-dollar race with rival autonomous vehicle developers including Alphabet Inc.'s Waymo and General Motors Co.'s Cruise to turn their futuristic tech into a consumer product.

Baidu and a rival, Pony.ai, received China's first licenses in April to operate taxis with no one in the driver's seat but with a safety supervisor on board. That came 18 months after Waymo started driverless ride-hailing service in Phoenix, Arizona, in October 2020.

Founded in 2000 as a search engine operator, Baidu has expanded into artificial intelligence, processor chips and other technology. It says its autonomous vehicles could, if successful, make driving cheaper, easier and safer.

"We believe the top goal of autonomous driving is to reduce human-caused traffic accidents," said Wei Dong, vice president of Baidu's Intelligent Driving Group.

Autonomous driving is one of an array of emerging technologies from artificial intelligence to renewable energy that China companies are pouring billions of dollars into trying to create, urged on by the ruling Communist Party.

Beijing wants to join the United States, Europe and Japan in the ranks of technology powers to build its prosperity and global influence. That holds out the possibility of new inventions but also fuels tension with Washington and its allies, which see China as a strategic challenger.

Baidu's Apollo autonomous driving platform was launched in 2017 and the Apollo Go self-driving taxi service three years later.

Taxi service with a driver at the wheel to take over in an emergency started in 2020 and has expanded to Beijing, Shanghai and eight other cities. Apollo Go says it provided 213,000 rides in the final quarter of last year, making it the world's busiest self-driving taxi service.

For rides with no driver and a supervisor in the passenger seat, Apollo Go started in a 60-square-kilometer area of Yizhuang,

an industrial district on Beijing's southeastern outskirts with wide streets and few cyclists or pedestrians.

"It's very convenient," said Zhao Hui, 43, who uses Baidu taxis in Yizhuang.

"It might feel a little safer" than a human driver, Zhao said. "Sometime there are small objects, maybe some that people don't notice. They can spot them and stop."

Other developers include Deeproute.ai and AutoX in Shenzhen. Pony.ai, founded in 2016 and backed by venture capital, is road-testing autonomous cars and semi-trailer trucks.

Industry plans are "very aggressive to deliver the robo-taxi to the consumer," said Owen Chen of S&P Global Mobility.

Automaker Geely, owner of Volvo Car, Geely, Lotus and Polestar, has announced plans for satellite-linked autonomous vehicles. Network equipment maker Huawei Technologies Ltd. is working on self-driving mining and industrial vehicles.

The ruling party is promoting automation to shore up economic growth by making its shrinking, aging workforce more productive. China's working-age population has fallen by 5% since its 2011 peak and is forecast to slide further.

"People are very expensive,"

said Wei. "Once this public service no longer needs people, the cost can drop rapidly."

As for whether China can lead the global industry, "it's a race at the moment," said Pete Kelly, managing director of the automotive division of GlobalData Plc.

"But they could easily do this, because of the way decisions are made and deployments happen in China," Kelly said.

McKinsey & Co. in 2019 estimated China's potential market for self-driving taxis, buses, trucks and other equipment and software in the trillions of dollars.

The earliest products are unlikely to earn back their development costs but might be "loss leaders" to sell other services, said Kelly.

Baidu says it already is selling navigation and other technology to automakers. It projects total sales of 10 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion) based on agreements made so far, chairman Robin Li said in a May 26 conference call with reporters.

The company says it spent a total of 24.9 billion yuan (\$3.9 billion) on research and development last year but doesn't disclose how much of that went into autonomous vehicles. Baidu reported a profit of 10.2 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion) last year on 124.5 billion yuan (\$19.5

billion) in revenue.

Baidu and its most advanced rivals have reached the industry's Level 4 out of five possible levels of technology. That means their systems can operate without a driver but must be pre-loaded with a detailed map. That limits the area where they can operate.

Lower levels of technology range from cruise control, a feature available for decades, up to Level 3, which allows hands-free highway driving. Self-driving robot carts already are widely used in factories, warehouses and other tightly controlled settings.

Once self-driving taxis are on the road, operators must gather information about pedestrians and local conditions based on daily driving, a time-intensive process that will slow the technology's rollout.

For a maneuver such as a U-turn, the Apollo system tracks as many as 200 vehicles, pedestrians and other potential obstacles as much as 100 meters (110 yards) away, according to Baidu.

Wei said Baidu would be happy to have foreign partners adapt its technology to their markets but has no export plans yet while it focuses on Chinese cities.

Intersections still are a challenge, Wei said. Pedestrians in China are used to drivers gradually making their way through crowds in a crosswalk while turning on a green light, but a robot car can't do that.

"Our car always will yield to people and might wind up not getting through the light," Wei said.

Baidu has launched its own self-driving car brand, JIDU, which unveiled a concept car this month. Li said the company will target the market for family vehicles priced above 200,000 yuan (\$30,000).

The company also has deals with three Chinese electric vehicle brands to produce cars with computers, radar and light-based sensors built in instead of bolted onto the roof. Baidu says it aims for a sticker price of 480,000 yuan (\$72,000) for its latest generation of taxis.

To encourage others to use Apollo, Baidu has made the platform open-source and says it has signed up 210 industry partners and 80,000 developers who might create products based on it.

Apollo Go says it plans to expand self-driving taxi service to 65 cities by 2025 and 100 by 2030.

Compared with a human driver, "the difference isn't big," said Zhang Zhihua, 29, an interior designer who uses driverless Baidu taxis in Yizhuang. "If you aren't looking at the front and if you are playing on your mobile phone, then it feels exactly the same." **MDT/AP**

TENNIS

Serena Williams loses at Wimbledon in 1st match in a year

HOWARD FENDRICH,
WIMBLEDON

SERENA Williams began — and ended — her comeback at Wimbledon after 364 days out of singles competition looking very much like someone who hadn't competed in just that long. She missed shots, shook her head, rolled her eyes.

In between, there were moments where Williams played very much like someone whose strokes and will have carried her to 23 Grand Slam titles. She hit blistering serves and strokes, celebrated with arms aloft.

Returning to the site of her last singles match, which she had to stop after less than a set because of an injury on June 29, 2021, and seven of her major championships, the 40-year-old Williams came within two points of victory. But she could not finish the job against an opponent making her Wimbledon debut and bowed out with a 7-5, 1-6, 7-6 (10-7) loss to 115th-ranked Harmony Tan of France.

"It's definitely better than last year," Williams said. "That's a start."

Asked whether this might have been her last match, Williams replied: "That's a question I can't answer. I don't know. ... Who knows? Who knows where I'll pop up?"

With her older sister, Venus, jumping out of a guest box seat at Centre Court to celebrate the best points, Serena Williams was oh-so-close to pulling out a topsy-turvy match that lasted 3 hours, 11 minutes and was contested with the retractable roof shut for the last two sets.

"For my first Wimbledon, it's: Wow. Just wow," said the 24-year-old Tan, who recalled watching Williams on TV as a youngster.

"When I saw the draw, I was really scared," Tan said with a laugh, "because it's Serena Williams. She's a legend. I was like, 'Oh, my God, how can I play?'"

This is one indication



AP PHOTO

of how things were at the get-go: Of Tan's first 11 points, only one came via a winner she produced. Others came via errors by Williams, either forced or unforced.

While Williams — who wore two pieces of black tape on her right cheek; the reason was not immediately clear — recovered from dropping the opening two games to lead 4-2, she reversed course again and allowed Tan to quickly climb back into that set with her mix of spins and slices.

When Tan pulled even at 4-all by striking a down-the-line backhand winner, she celebrated with a yell; that shot was so good that even Williams felt compelled to applaud.

Tan came into the day with a 2-6 career record at all Grand Slam tournaments. Clearly enjoying herself — and the setting, the moment, the way it all was going — she broke to lead 6-5 with the help of a cross-court forehand winner, looked at her guest box, raised a fist and waved her arms to ask for more noise from a crowd that was loudly backing Williams.

Soon enough, a forehand passing winner gave Tan that set. At that point, it seemed reasonab-

le to ask: Could Tan pull off by far the biggest victory of her career? Might Williams exit a major in the first round for only the third time in 80 appearances (the previous were a loss at the 2012 French Open and that mid-match retirement at Wimbledon last year)?

The latter is what happened, of course, although Williams certainly played spectacularly in the second set. She won a monumental game to lead 2-0, breaking after 30 points and 12 deuces across almost 20 minutes when Tan shanked a forehand into the chair umpire's stand.

In a blink, then, it was 5-0 and sure seemed as if Williams was on her way.

Her serves picked up pace and became more accurate, too: After winning just 57% of her first-serve points in the first set, she claimed 80% in the second. Her other strokes were better-calibrated: After making 22 unforced errors in the first set, she made 13 in the second.

In the third set, Williams was two points from advancing while serving for the match at 5-4 but couldn't get closer.

Williams has spent more than 300 weeks ranked No. 1 but currently is 1,204th on account off all of that

time off and thus needed a wild-card invitation from the All England Club to enter the bracket.

"If you're playing week in, week out, or even every three weeks, every four weeks, there's a little bit more match toughness," she said. "But with that being said, I felt like I played pretty OK on some of 'em. Not all of 'em. Maybe some key ones I definitely could have played better. You've got to think if I were playing matches, I wouldn't miss some of those points."

Still, Tan was a point from victory at 6-5, and Williams erased that with a forehand winner — beginning a seven-point run that not only sent the match to a tiebreaker but put her ahead 4-0 in it.

Yet Tan would not go gently. She grabbed five points in a row for a 5-4 lead in the new final-set tiebreaker format adopted this year by all four tennis majors: first to 10 points, win by two.

At crunch time, when Williams has excelled so often on so many big stages, she faltered. Tan came through. MDT/AP

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OPINION

China Daily
 Liu Jianna, China Daily

WOMEN'S RIGHTS SACRIFICED AT THE ALTAR OF US JUDICIARY

The Supreme Court of the United States has overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade of 1973 that legalized abortion in the country. By ruling on Friday that the right to abortion was not “deeply rooted in this Nation’s history or tradition”, the Supreme Court put an end to the nearly 50 years of the federal constitutional right to abortion.

Now, the power to determine where, how and if abortion is permitted rests in the hands of individual US states, and more than half of them are expected to prohibit or severely restrict abortion. Indeed, at least six states including Arkansas, Kentucky and Missouri have rushed to do so by introducing “trigger laws”.

The Supreme Court ruling has enraged the progressive elements in the US, with people in the thousands taking to the streets in many cities to vent their anger. On the other hand, the conservatives celebrated the day as a long-awaited historic victory.

In fact, ever since the Supreme Court draft opinion on striking down the Roe v. Wade got leaked on May 2, the debate on abortion intensified to an irreconcilable degree.

Calling it a “sad day for the court and for the country” President Joe Biden called on US voters to elect candidates who will recover the abortion rights, while previous president Donald Trump tried to claim credit for nominating three conservative judges to the Supreme Court who were among the six justices to rule in favor of overturning Roe v. Wade.

In recent years, the US, which has long proclaimed itself to be a beacon of democracy and individual freedom, has become increasingly divided, with abortion being one of the most divisive and inflammatory issues among the people.

Despite the heightened tensions, and the heated debates on abortion, it seems the majority of the people in the US disapprove of the Supreme Court ruling. According to a Pew Research Center survey, about 61 percent of the adult respondents in the US said abortion should be legal all or most of the time, with only 37 percent saying it should be illegal. In simple terms, the overturning of Roe v. Wade is not a victory of the majority of Americans, but six of the nine Supreme Court justices who voted in favor of the ruling.

Many say US citizens’ confidence in the Supreme Court has dropped to a new low. According to a Gallup poll, only 25 percent of US adults have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the Supreme Court, down from 36 percent a year ago.

The Supreme Court ruling will have far-reaching impacts on US society. About 930,160 abortions were performed nationwide in 2020, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Deprived of the right to abortion, hundreds of thousands of women now have to shoulder the huge mental, physical, economic and social cost of pregnancy or seek the help of illegal abortion clinics even in cases of rape and incest.

Many women may even be forced to give birth to children who are likely to face baby formula shortage, child abuse and gun violence.

At the very least, without a one-stop service system to fully protect the rights of women and newborn, the verdict to end the constitutional right to abortion is ill-considered.

The chaos over the Supreme Court ruling reveals only the tip of the deeply rooted trouble the US is getting itself mired into: the slow death of democracy and the irresistible rise of partisanship.

All the talk of a fetus’ right to life and reproductive freedom will hit a dead-end, because it is nothing more than an instrument politicians and officials employ to realize their ulterior motives.

[Abridged]

EU PROPOSES BAN ON FLAVORED HEATED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

THE BUZZ

The European Union’s executive branch yesterday proposed a ban on the sale of flavored heated tobacco products as part of its plan to fight cancer.

The European Commission said its proposal comes in response to a significant increase in the volume of such products sold across the 27-nation bloc.

A recent commission study showed a 10% increase in sales of heated tobacco products in more than five member nations, while heated tobacco products exceeded 2.5% of total sales of tobacco products overall across the region.

The ban would cover devices using heated tobacco to produce emissions containing nicotine inhaled by users. E-cigarettes may contain nicotine, but not tobacco. With traditional cigarettes, users inhale smoke from burning tobacco.

“With nine out of 10 lung cancers caused by tobacco, we want to make smoking as unattractive as possible to protect the health of our citizens and save lives,” said Stella Kyriakides, the commissioner for health and food safety.

According to EU figures, cancer is the second cause of death in the bloc of 450 million residents.



Pope Francis, greets Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and her husband, Paul Pelosi in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, yesterday

PELOSI RECEIVES COMMUNION IN VATICAN AMID ABORTION DEBATE

NICOLE WINFIELD, ROME

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi met with Pope Francis yesterday and received Communion during a papal Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica, witnesses said, despite her position in support of abortion rights.

Pelosi attended the morning Mass marking the feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul, during which Francis bestowed the woolen pallium stole on newly consecrated archbishops. She was seated in a VIP diplomatic section of the basilica and received Communion along with the rest of the congregants, according to two people who witnessed the moment.

Pelosi’s home archbishop, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, has said he will no longer allow her to receive the sacrament in his archdiocese because of her support for abortion rights. Cordileone, a conservative, has said Pelosi must either repudiate her support for abortion or stop speaking publicly of her Catholic faith.

Pelosi has done neither. She called the recent Supreme Court ruling removing constitutional protections for abortion an “outrageous and heart-wrenching” decision that fulfills the Republican Party’s “dark and extreme goal of ripping away women’s right to make their own reproductive health

decisions.”

And she has spoken openly about the Catholic faith, including at a diplomatic reception at the residence of the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See on Tuesday evening marking Independence Day.

Speaking to a crowd of ambassadors, Vatican officials and other Rome-based Americans, Pelosi noted the Catholic virtues of faith, hope and charity and the important role they play in the U.S. Embassy’s mission.

“Faith is an important gift, not everyone has it but it is the path to so many other things,” she told the crowd.

Pelosi met with Francis yesterday before the Mass and received a blessing, according to one of the Mass attendees. A photo released by the Vatican showed Pelosi and her husband, Paul Pelosi, greeting Francis off to the side of the basilica.

Francis has strongly upheld the church’s opposition to abortion, and said church leaders must “continue to care for human life.” But in his homily, Francis also instructed the new archbishops to welcome everyone into the church, including sinners, and to not “remain pinned to some of our fruitless debates.”

“So many times we become a church with open doors, but only to send people away, to condemn

them,” he said.

After the Mass, Pelosi visited the Sant’Egidio Community, a Catholic charity close to Francis where she met with refugees helped by the group. At an event to award the charity with \$25,000 in State Department funding, Pelosi referred to the need to preach the Gospel with actions, not just words.

“We had the pleasure of attending Mass this morning with His Holiness and many many many leaders of the church,” Pelosi said. “In the spirit of St. Francis, which is the name of His Holiness and my city of San Francisco, I thank you for preaching the Gospel, sometimes using words.”

While Francis presided over the Mass, he did not distribute Communion himself and Pelosi received the sacrament from one of the many priests who distributed it. From the time he was archbishop in Buenos Aires, Francis has rarely distributed Communion, precisely to prevent the sacrament from becoming politicized.

Last year, President Joe Biden, another Catholic who also supports abortion rights, said after meeting with Francis that the pontiff told him to continue receiving the sacrament. Biden later received Communion during a Mass in a Rome church that is under the authority of Francis as bishop of Rome. **MDT/AP**



Iran Indirect negotiations between Iran and the U.S. over Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal with world powers will ended yesterday in Qatar, authorities in Tehran said. A semiofficial news agency reported the talks didn’t break a diplomatic deadlock over the accord. The U.S. State Department and the European Union, which mediated the talks in Qatar, did not immediately acknowledge the end of the negotiations in Doha.

NATO declared Russia the “most significant and direct threat” to its members’ peace and security, as the military alliance met yesterday to confront what NATO’s chief called the biggest security crisis since World War II. It also promised to “step up political and practical support” to Ukraine as it fights off Russia’s invasion. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy chided NATO for not embracing his embattled country more fully and asked for more weapons to defeat Moscow’s forces. **More on p8**



Ukraine Russian forces battled yesterday to surround the Ukrainian military’s last stronghold in a long-contested eastern province as shock reverberated from a Russian airstrike on a shopping mall that killed at least 18 people in the center of the country a day earlier. Moscow’s battle to wrest the entire Donbas region from Ukraine saw Russia forces pushing toward two Luhansk province villages south of the city of Lysychansk while Ukrainian troops fought to prevent their encirclement.



Poland Top-ranked Iga Swiatek will host a charity tennis event next month in her home country of Poland to raise funds for children and teenagers impacted by the war in Ukraine. The event in Krakow on July 23 will feature a mixed doubles exhibition match and Ukraine soccer great Andriy Shevchenko will be a special guest.